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ABSTRACT

Based on visits to and interviews in 14 countries (Senegal, The Gambia, Niger, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Zaire, Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, the United States, France, Italy, and Canada) this report provides a detailed accounting of the present and potential use of television to support development through non-formal educational programming in Africa. Past experiences, current experiments, and future possibilities for improving the capacity of television to serve as a tool for development are outlined and examples are provided. Where television failed and why it is considered a disappointment as an educational tool in Africa is also discussed, but the major focus of the report is on how television can get back on track and what the chances are for making changes. Ways to enhance television's message reception such as group viewing, the use of government television sets powered by solar energy, and complementing television broadcasts with field animation and other media are covered in Section 1. Section 2 describes three possibilitiess for improving television's capacity to educate, including the use of drama to present socially-relevant messages, decentralized and narrowcast use of video, and the importance of formative surveying, pretesting, and feedback. Section 3, which considers several areas in which television can potentially help, focuses on educating women in such a way as to inspire their participation in the development process, agriculture, and health care education. The country of Cameroon is examined as a microcosm of an African television service. Discussions of cost-effectiveness and political considerations involved in the "reinvention" of television as part of Africa's broadcasting development conclude the report. Appended are a series of black and white photographs illustrating various aspects of television development in Africa and accompanied by narrative explanations. (Author/DJR)

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TELEVISION FOR DEVELOPMENT:
The African Experience

Iain McLellan

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After 25 years of experience with television in Africa, there is widespread disappointment with the medium and its capacity to enlighten and educate the general population.

In preparing this report, the author has taken an attitude of constructive criticism. The medium's shortcomings are easy enough to identify. But rather than simply identify what is wrong with television in Africa, this paper attempts to suggest ways that it might be improved and better serve African societies.

The bottom line is that just about every African government has decided to develop a television service of some sort or another. Television is on the African continent to stay despite all it's inherent problems. By concentrating on innovations, successful experiments and improving television's capacity to educate and enlighten, this author hopes that the most powerful and potent of the communication media can be radically changed and do a better job of promoting the social and economic development of all citizens on the African continent.

Part of the motivation for conducting the research for this paper was to provide those involved in television for development in Africa the benefit of each other's experience. As a result you will find this paper chock full of examples.

Also, because the paper was written with both the layman and the academic in mind, it is somewhat a hybrid of styles. It is not a thesis with one underlying point to prove and it is not an elongated magazine article. But it features characteristics of both in terms of form.

As far as the substance is concerned, the paper considers the promise and potential television holds for supporting development. It also looks at where the medium went wrong and why it is considered a disappointment in Africa. And finally, the bulk of the work examines what it might take to get development support television back on track and what the chances are for making those changes.

During the research of this paper, the author visited and conducted interviews in 14 countries including: Senegal, The Gambia, Niger, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Zaire, Congo, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, the United States, France, Italy and Canada. An attempt was made to make contact with a wide sprectrum of African society from media professionals and government officials to peasants and development workers in the field. Also, interviews were conducted with a variety of international development organizations and non-governmental agencies involved in Development Support Communications.

To be sure, most of the research was done in the capitals where the lion's share of officials live and work. But rural Africans were far from forgotten and innumerable field trips were organized to meet and talk with villagers about their development and communications needs.

Finally, I would like to thank Ousseynou Diop of Radio Canada International, Bob Huggan of The International Development Research Centre, Charles Morrow of The Canadian International Development Agency and all the others who have been so helpful and supportive and believe in the limitless possibilities for helping people help themselves through Development Support Communications.

* * *

For

Jeanie Orr McLellan-Speedie,

a life-long supporter

Introduction:
African Television's Unfulfilled Potential

In N'Zikpli, a small village without electricity in central Ivory Coast, the elders of the community were asked about what they had learned from the battery-powered television the government had installed in the local school in 1974.

After explaining, through an interpreter, that they had learned a lot about life outside the village, the men were asked if they had any questions about what they had seen. The chief was the first to speak: "Is it true that the white man can fly without wings?" "Why are whites always stabbing, punching and shooting each other?" another man asked.

* * *

Television two decades ago was thought to be the miracle needed to solve many of Africa's problems. It was to be the new oracle, the catalyst necessary to usher the continent into the mainstream of 20th century life.

What has happened to television since then? Is it being used to its full capacity to aid development? If not, how can it be made more effective? What is the future for this potent and captivating medium in Africa?

With these questions in mind, a survey of 10 African countries was undertaken. Television was found to be in various stages of development in each country. But in each country, great dissatisfaction with the way the medium has evolved and is being used was expressed by just about everyone interviewed -- producers, government officials, viewers, educators, field workers and aid donors.

However, before one can come to terms with television for development, some other important and relevant questions should be asked: What kind of development? Why develop? Development for whom? What is the relationship between a traditional and a modern society?

Though the importance of these questions is acknowledged, this paper does not attempt to deal with them. The author, it should be noted, is a journalist by vocation and will leave those issues to be analysed by those better qualified to do so.

Television offers a number of advantages to nations where there is a need for rapid development of education and the communication of information on development. Television has been referred to as "the magic multiplyer"[1] and can be an inspiring teacher when used in the non-formal education of adults.

It has the potential of reaching large numbers of people and making development goals universally known. Because of its combination of audio and visual components it can be used to communicate relatively complicated messages to illiterate audiences. It can also be an inspiring catalyst for change if used interactively to enhance communication between all those involved in development including governments, donors, field workers, rural populations and the urban poor.

UNESCO's MacBride Commission in its report acknowledges the enormous potential the omnipresence of communications in modern society has created for education. The newly developed communications technology has turned such concepts as the "information society", "global village" and the "people's right to know" into reality.[2]

Television with its captivating message and ability to inform masses of people provides the African villager the same potential as farmers in India or the Canadian Inuit for making the transition from a traditional society to participation in a modern one. Thomas McPhail contends that developing countries "may now be able to go from the Stone Age to the Information Age without having passed through the intervening steps of industrialization."[3]

The authors of Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance find consistent and persuasive data relating media use to modernizing attitudes and practices of peasants.

"It is fair to argue that the mass media have an identifiable share in the modernization of individual attitudes and practices. Indicators of economic and political modernity such as empathy (the ability to take the role of the other), innovativeness in agriculture and in the home, or participation in political affairs can be shown to be related to mass-media exposure."[4]

It has also been suggested that media development contributes greatly to strengthening the structures of local community life by creating a "psychic mobility" or bringing the outside world to remote areas.

"In this way (governments) might obviate the seemingly irreversible trek to the towns, which in turn makes heavy demands on capital investment in urban infrastructure."[5]

* * *

But despite this "proven" potential, television's record as an educator and instrument for bringing changes and progress in Africa is a dismal one. The medium has not lived up to its promise of enlightening and motivating the masses.

Nigeria recently celebrated its 25th anniversary of broadcasting by examining what television has become and discussing what it might be. The feeling among government officials, broadcasters and the general public is that it has failed to meet the challenge of accelerating the development process, contributing to the integration of society and providing the means for preserving traditional cultural values.[6]

In fact, there is evidence that the medium has even had a negative influence and enlarged, rather than diminished, the gap between rich and poor and urban and rural. And instead of nurturing traditional cultural values it has eroded them by offering large amounts of imported programming.[7]

Those who need information on development, most the urban poor and rural population, are usually not reached by television signals, can't affort receivers or don't have electricity to power them. And since television takes the lion's share of often limited communications budgets, there is little money left to be spent on other media which are more effective in reaching those with the greatest need for information on development.[8]

Television has been called the "jewel of a tired and spent bourgeoisie"[9] because of the fabulous expense of operating the medium and its tendency to cater to an educated, upper-class, urban elite. Dr. O.A. Fadeyibi of the University of Lagos' Mass Communications Department describes television as a reverse Robin Hood. Poor people's taxes are being used to entertain the rich and governments end up paying large amounts of money to send the wrong messages to the wrong people.

Part of the reason that broadcasting in Africa has been a disappointment the authors of Broadcasting in the Third World believe, is because the analysis of the potential of television was faulty to start with. There has been a tendency to underestimate the social, cultural, economic and political restraints that combine to limit its potential.[10]

The political restraints have particularly handicapped television's development. Few governments have encouraged the kind of freedom of expression in the media which would enable the urban poor and rural populations to better understand themselves and articulate their needs. Colin Fraser, a communications consultant formerly of the FAO, suggests that African leaders generally fail to realize the importance of the human dimension in rural development.

"Most countries use a tiny percentage of their communications budgets for rural development and very often it suits them just fine that way."[11]

In light of the political instability which exists in many African countries, it is not easy for governments to embrace the idea of giving their citizenry the means to raise their consciousness, explore various development options and express their point of view.

According to Université de Dakar communications professor El Hadj Diouf, most African governments tend to misunderstand what the real danger is in giving or not giving their populations a voice and listening to what it has to say. They fear that once communication channels are opened, they will be used to criticize and organize resistance and even overthrow sitting governments. But Diouf argues that there is a much greater risk in keeping the population mute, ignoring their input and making only cosmetic changes.

Unfortunately, African governments have chosen to implant television broadcasting systems that are in the style of the western countries that helped establish them. They tend to be very cumbersome, heavily centralized and dependent on high-cost production techniques and facilities. In Zaire and Zambia, for example, so much money has been spent on establishing a highly centralized and expensive infrastructure there is little left to do the kind of programmes needed to modernize attitudes and behavior. Both countries have magnificant, large and modern broadcasting facilities as well as competent producers and directors. But the production facilities and the production talent are greatly under used because of the lack of money to buy raw film and cassettes and to pay production costs.

Also, partly due to financial restraints and partly due to political ones, television producers rarely venture out of the capitals to mix with, understand, and finally, assist rural people in communicating with each other and with those who are trying to help them.

Most African countries have adopted the same approach to television as the North Americans and Europeans but they don't have the resources to do it. The result is that the broadcasters are spending much of their budgets on producing African versions of western-format programmes, programme schedules tend to be filled with a great deal of imported light entertainment and, in most cases, television is not being used as much as it could be to educate rather than just divert.

Any efforts to use television to communicate development messages beyond the most general of outlines have been spotty, erratic, and have had, for the most part, little impact. Development support programming has rarely been coordinated with other development efforts and has been decisively unidirectional. Precious little is being done to use the medium as a means to exchange information between all segments of society.

African television, as a rule, rarely shows or explains Africa to Africans, it looks elsewhere. What we often see on African television is "Dallas", "I Love Lucy", "Stanford and Son", French police films and other imports with no redeeming social value.

On most evenings, the African content seen on the majority of African televisions is represented by political speeches, reports on visits of foreign dignitaries, development "experts", speaking over the heads of the average viewer in European languages, telling them how they should develop, or dramas featuring upper class characters dealing with typically western problems.

* * *

Despite the costs and handicaps, just about every African government has chosen to develop television. It is a very glamorous medium in any country and for African governments it represents both prestige and a means for communicating political messages to largely illiterate populations. A number of those surveyed agree that if television is to justify its role in low-income countries, it can only do so if it is used as an instrument of development. And it can only be an effective instrument if it is integrated and coordinated with other development efforts.[12]

Broadcast signals that reach rural as well as urban areas via satellites, government-purchased and maintained group viewing televisions powered by solar energy, coordinated multi-media campaigns and local animation, increased feedback and inter-action between broadcaster and viewer and decentralized or community broadcasting and video in local languages, are seen by many as the future for development support television.

During a three-month, 10 country survey of television broadcasting in Africa some encouraging signs were seen. Nigeria has plans to completely restructure its 32 station network and programming orientation to make it more responsive to developmental needs and relevant to a larger percentage of the population. The Nigerian Television Authority will be partly decentralized by giving the local stations the resources to produce for the national network as well as their local programming.

Ivory Coast has started to coordinate non-formal educational television broadcasts with a network of field animators who are equipped with other forms of development support communications media. Televisions that were used in the formal education of children are being taken out of the schools and placed in villages around the country and powered by solar panels if electricity isn't available.

Niger is proving that a lot can be done with few resources. It operates solar-powered televisions for group viewing in a number of rural villages as well as in urban youth centres. Télé-Sahel's whole programme schedule is geared to non-formal education and more video recording is being done on location in rural areas than in the Niamey studios.

The first section of this paper concentrates on experiments and innovations with group viewing centres, solar-powered televisions, animation and combining television with other Development Support Communications media.

The next section disects three aspects of television for development which hold enormous potential for improving the medium's capacity as an educator: social dramas, video or narrowcasting and formative evaluation and research.

The final section looks at specific parts of African society which should benefit from an increased capacity of television to support development: women, agriculture and health. Also included in this section is an overview of the television for development needs of Cameroon, a country in the process of starting up its first television service.

Footnotes

[1] Graham Mytton, Mass Communications in Africa, (London, 1983), p. 27.

[2] Sean MacBride, Many Voices, One World in Problèmes Audiovisuels, No. 11 (January-February, 1983), p. 13.

[3] Thomas McPhail, Electronic Colonialism, (London, 1981), p. 20.

[4] Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner, Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance, (London, 1978), p. 182.

[5] Ibid., p. 229.

[6] "Twenty-five years of television broadcasting in Nigeria", Television Journal, (July-September, 1984), p. 21.

[7] Mytton, Mass Communications ..., op. cit., p. 132.

[8] Katz, etc., Broadcasting ..., op. cit., p. 87.

[9] Sean MacBride, Many Voices, One World, (Paris, 1980), p. 56.

[10] Katz, etc. Broadcasting ..., op. cit., p. 240.

[11] Jean-Claude Crépeau, "L'audiovisuel au coeur de développement", Actuel Développement, (January-February, 1985), p. 40.

[12] Katz, etc., Broadcasting ..., op. cit., p. 224.

First Section:
Enhancing Television's Message Reception

Group Viewing,
Government Sets
and Solar Power

The use of broadcast television to support development in Africa is often criticized because the medium is primarily available in urban areas (where there is electricity and, more often than not, the only broadcast signals), and is accessible only to an affluent elite who can afford to buy television sets.

To be sure, those who need development information most -- the 80 percent of the continents population who live in rural areas -- have next to no access to television.[1] However, there have been efforts made in a number of countries -- most notably Nigeria, Ivory Coast and Niger -- to make television more accessible to the urban poor and rural populations largely through government sponsored televisions used for group viewing.

* * *

The growth rate in the number of television sets and areas covered by broadcasting signals in Africa has been phenomenal over the last two decades. From 1960 to 1976 the number of receivers in Africa has increased by 20 times.[2] For example, in Nigeria, 25 percent of the country is covered by television signals and, though only two percent of the population owns a receiver, there is a 15 percent annual growth rate in the number of sets bought.[3] Africa's most sophisticated television broadcasting system is in Zaire where 13 satellite ground stations are linked up with 17 transmitters to reach a part of each region in the 2.3 million square Km country and 10 percent of the population.

Ivory Coast, largely as a result of the massive educational television service developed in the 1970's, has television signals that reach 70 percent of the country's villages and there are 20,000 government-owned televisions spread around the country. Estimates on the number of television receivers in Africa (excluding the Arab states) range from 2.7[4] to 11 million.[5]

In fact, nobody is exactly sure how many televisions there are on the continent. There is very little reliable demographic information available on population size let alone figures on television receivers.

* * *

However, one fact is certain: Unlike their western counterparts who watch television alone or with their immediate families, African television owners will often place their set outdoors so that extended family members and neighbors can watch it.

In a study of television viewers in Zambia, Graham Mytton found that though television owners tend to come from upper income groups, because of the extended family's access to the receivers, 26 percent of the viewers surveyed were from lower income groups.[6]

A Nigerian Television Authority survey of viewers in Nigeria found that television in that country is "no longer the preserve of the upper class".[7] Half the TV audience was found to be middle class, 40 percent from lower income groups and only 10 percent from the upper class.

To illustrate this aspect of African television viewing consider two examples: one in Niger and another in Zaire.

Just after the sunset in Yantala, a lower-income neighborhood of Niamey, Niger, when the news is being broadcast in the tribal languages, the most predominant light to be seen is the grey-blue glow emanating from black and white television sets placed in courtyards. In each courtyard, anywhere from 10 to 50 people, mostly men, can be found huddled around the small screens listening and watching attentively. No notice seemed to be taken of who entered the courtyards to share in the viewing.

In Kindamba, a village in rural Zaire, the number of viewers -- sometimes as many as 500 -- who came to watch the local train stationmaster's television grew so large that he bought a second set for he and his family to watch, more peacefully, inside his house.

As far as the future is concerned, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation television programme director Job Jonhera likes to compare the potential for the development of television in rural areas with that of radio a generation ago. Radio signals 20 years ago were limited to urban areas and radio receivers were too expensive for the vast majority of the population. Radio signals in Zimbabwe now cover 95 percent of the country, and technological advances -- particularly the invention of the transistor -- has made radios cheap and affordable for the majority.

* * *

At this moment none of the countries surveyed were doing anything to reduce the purchase price of a television set. In fact, television sets tend to be highly taxed -- sometimes as much as 200 percent of their value. Though the government of Niger has a 51 percent interest in a company that sells and repairs televisions, the average price of a set is at least twice as much as the same set would cost in Europe.

Zaire considered establishing a television receiver assembly factory in cooperation with a Japanese electronics manufacturer, but the plan was abandoned as unfeasible.

The governments appear to be caught between wanting to encourage television as a unifying national force, reaching as many people as possible, and the economic problems involved in allowing precious foreign exchange to be used to buy sets.

* * *

However, in each of the countries surveyed, money had been allocated to conduct experiments with group viewing centres, primarily in rural villages without electricity. Solar power, particularly, is seen as the solution to the puzzle of how to break the city's (i.e. electrified) monopoly on television access.

Group viewing holds a number of advantages beyond the obvious economic ones of obtaining the greatest audience for each government-purchased television set. According to Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shinar in Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance, enabling people in rural areas to watch television while in the company of their peers, reinforces television's message.

"As meeting places (group viewing centres) become, in effect, group learning centres that, like psychotherapy, are often more effective than addressing people as isolated individuals ... The presence of television (in traditional gathering places) enlarges the range of subjects for discussion and informal learning; thus providing sets could be a good investment of a wider process of modernization."[8]

However, as exciting and promising the phenomenon of group viewing and subsidized television sets may seem, the reality is that the experiments have been on a very small scale touching relatively few people.

It also remains to be seen just how quickly the projects, which are outlined in the next section, will grow (considering the economic problems of many African countries), and the growing suspicion that television's viability as a medium for mass education is questionable.

* * *

To address what one educational broadcaster refers to as an effort to bridge the growing educational gap between urban and rural and educated and non-educated, Nigeria embarked on an ambitious program of establishing group viewing centres. The experiment was based on the success of India's Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) in which a daily average of 100 people watch each government-purchased television for a total audience of 2.5 million in 2,400 isolated, rural villages.[9] In Oyo State, 100 centres were opened and operated by Western Nigerian Television (WNTV) 10 years ago.

WNTV decided that it would be more economical to place television sets in public buildings that already exist rather than incur the expense of building new ones. It is believed that by placing television sets in village squares, community centres and other "breeding places of public opinion",[10] television and it's message enters more easily and effectively into a community's life and discussions.

Lalupon, a town of 50,000 in rural Oyo State, decided to place the 26 inch color television set furnished and serviced by WNTV (now Nigerian Television Authority-Ibadan) in the local cinema. A generator was also purchased to provide electricity during the community's frequent power failures.

The village Chief, Olahanloye Akinmoyede, who is also the school headmaster in Lalupon, is very pleased with the positive impact the public-access television has had on his community -- particularly on the children.

"The children like it so much and it is a very good influence. Of all the amenities it is one of the best. At the same time we see pictures and the same time talking. Everything at the same time. And we learn so many things. All what happened in far away places. We are seeing everything like we are there."

The Japanese-made television set, an antennae, the generator and the construction of a special secure storage depot cost $3,000 (U.S.). The set is cleaned once a month and overhauled once a year by one of the two full-time NTA-Ibadan technicians who service 17 other centres.

Unfortunately, of the 100 group viewing centres which were in operation in 1976 in Oyo State, only 17 remain. Televisions were stolen or smashed by rival political groups who disliked television programming featuring what they saw as political propaganda. The Nigerian Television Authority has offered the 32 stations around the country grants of $200,000 (U.S.) to establish community viewing centres in rural communities.

* * *

After South Africa and Nigeria, Ivory Coast has the largest number of televisions per capita in Africa (5 per 100 population).[11] And unlike her African neighbors, television in Ivory Coast has become very much a rural phenomenon as well as an urban one. Largely due to the major investment the government made along with UNESCO, the World Bank and the governments of France and Canada, televisions were placed in 70 percent of the country's schools in Africa's largest experiment in educational television.

After ten years and very disappointing results, the use of television in the formal classroom setting, in the instruction of children in Ivory Coast has ended and the experiment is now considered a failure. But the experience of opening the schools in the evenings for adults to watch non-formal educational television programming has had a marked effect on the rural population and is credited with inspiring improvements in preventative health care and agricultural techniques, throughout Ivory Coast.

It quickly became a ritual in many rural villages for adults to meet at the local school to watch Télé Pour Tous, a half-hour programme designed for rural audiences by the Education Extra-Scolaire division of the Ministère de l'Education Nationale Ivoirien. According to George Ketta, the Télé Pour Tous production chief, 80 percent of the programme is filmed in the interior and it speaks simply and directly to rural people and remains one of the most popular programmes on Ivorian television.

When the televisions were first placed in the schools in Kouassi Blikro, a small village without electricity in central Ivory Coast, just about the whole village would crowd into the 11 classrooms to see television for the first time. Some would walk as far as 100 kilometers from neighboring villages without schools to see Télé Pour Tous. Jacques N'Ouessan, a teacher in the Kouassi Blikro school, who is active in other aspects of village life, credits Télé Pour Tous with inspiring the villagers to form an agricultural co-operative and attempt to eliminate a number of water-borne diseases.

Though Télé Pour Tous remains a mainstay in Wednesday night programming, very few of the 20,000 government-owned televisions are still operable mainly because the infrastructure, set up to maintain the sets and recharge the batteries, folded along with the whole Télévision Scolaire project in 1981.

The responsibility for resurrecting the government-owned black and white televisions, spreading them around to villages without schools, connecting them to a power source (probably solar panels) and developing an integrated multi-media and animation network, has become the responsibility of the Ministère de Développement Rurale. Though the 11 televisions once used in the Kouassi Blikro school classrooms are now gathering dust in a store room, and the batteries that powered them dead, there are as many as half a dozen privately owned sets in the village powered by car batteries. "Kouassi Blikro is not unlike other villages visited by Télé Pour Tous crews," says George Ketta, "which have been bitten by the television bug and go to great lengths (even travelling hundreds of kilometers to recharge car batteries) to keep television in their communities."

* * *

Like Ivory Coast, Niger developed an elaborate system of formal educational television in the seventies. At the time of Télé-Niger's inception in 1972, Niger's population was 95 percent rural, 99 percent illiterate and 94 percent had no formal education.[12] Television was believed to offer the highest possible return on modest investment of capital and human resources.

The government of the day hoped that television broadcast to rural areas would slow the massive rural exodus and create a bridge between city and countryside and between traditional culture and modern development. Theresa Silverman in Télé-Niger: Adapting an Electronic Medium to a Rural African Context writes:

"The economic benefits to the country as a whole were seen by the government as being served by educating a new generation of farmers, a generation willing to work the land and adapt to the current environment, yet open to innovations which might eventually modify the traditional life style."[13]

Television is no longer used in the formal education of students but the government has not abandoned its goal of using the medium to enlighten its population. Télé-Niger has evolved into Télé-Sahel and specializes now in the non-formal education of youths and adults.

With nine transmitters, Télé-Sahel covers every major city in the country and roughly 100 kilometers in circumference around it. There are plans to install solar-powered televisions for group viewing in 10,000 villages around the country at the rate of about 450 a year. So far 1,050 have been set up: 800 with solar panels and 250 in villages with electricity.

The emphasis on educating the country's growing legions of youth population (growth rate 3.6 annually) has not been forgotten. Television sets used in the schools have been placed in the network of "Samaria" or youth centres which can be found all around Niger. In Niamey there are 46 Samarias, one in each neighborhood, equipped with televisions.

The responsibility for installing, repairing and maintaining the government-owned receivers belongs to la Société Nigérienne de Télévision (S.N.T.V.), a partly privitized concern of which the government owns 51 percent, French interests 49 percent and Nigerian businessmen one percent.

All the government televisions are black and white, though Télé-Sahel broadcasts in color because they are less expensive to buy, fix and power. The first government-installed televisions ran on 34 volt batteries. Today, more economical and maintenance-free (water doesn't need to be added) 12 volt batteries are used in areas where solar panels haven't been installed.

La Société Nigerienne de Télévision employs eight technicians, eight drivers and operates four all-terrain vehicles. At a cost of $125 (U.S.) a year, a technician visits each viewing centre once every 45 days. To facilitate maintenance the newest generation of televisions are equipped with component parts mounted on chassis which can be easily removed and interchanged. This usually means that most televisions can be repaired on the spot with the extra chassis carried by the repair crews. It is obviously much easier to bring a book-sized chassis back to the shop for repair rather than a large television set, S.N.T.V.'s technical director Robert Bonnafous points out.

The biggest problem for the repair crews is that S.N.T.V. is not decentralized and a large part of the technician's time is spent on the road, travelling from Niamey in the west to distant points, 6,000 to 10,000 kilometers -- in the eastern part of the country. The second problem is a human one. The villagers often try to repair the televisions themselves or abuse the system by charging car batteries or powering other things besides the televisions with the solar energy.

The producer of Télé-Sahel's youth program "Magazine de Jeune" one evening took me on a tour of Samarias in Niamey to see the government-owned televisions in action. The first one we visited had a working set but it was locked up because the official responsible for it was ill. The second one had a television with sound but no picture. Though the S.N.T.V. offices had been contacted, the set had been out of order for three months. (Incidentally, the sound of the television blaring out in the otherwise still and quiet night quickly brought a dozen people to the empty youth centre. They left again just as quickly when they saw the set had no picture.)

We finally found a Samalia with a receiver operating. But even though Télé-Sahel was broadcasting a programme designed to explain agricultural science to youths it was impossible for the few who were watching the program to hear what was being said because of the noise being made by the 70 or so other youths playing in the courtyard of the Samalia.

The scene was reproduced in the two other group viewing centres I visited in villages. In Libore Bangou Banda, a small village 100 kilometers from Niamey, the adults who were watching a UNICEF film on house construction, asked the children sitting in front of the solar-powered television to be quiet, several times, but finally gave up and just watched the pictures. At a near-by police control station another government-owned television, this one powered by the police station generator, was encircled by as many as 200 youths and a giant cloud of dust caused by their ruckus. It was difficult enough to breathe the dusty air let alone hear anything above the din of the crowd or even get close enough to see what was being broadcast.

Malick Abdoulaye, a teacher in the local school, said the situation in Libore Bangou Banda is not always so chaotic when the television is on. He said it is only natural that the children would be attracted to the brightest light in the village after sunset even if they don't want to watch. But on the whole, he believes both the adults and children have benefited from the installation of the receiver.

"One TV is enough to inform the whole village. If there is a good programme, they all will come. It is also easier to teach the children about things they have seen on television. They are more interested and remember better."

* * *

L'Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Sénegal (O.R.T.S.) has installed a $3,200 (U.S.) solar-powered color television unit in the village of Deni Biram N'Dao, 70 miles from Dakar. The O.R.T.S. technicians are measuring the energy, (created by the 1.90 square metre solar panels) which has been consumed by the television receiver, and the viewing habits of the village residents.

They have found that the panels can produce 146 watts. The television needs 36 watts and the batteries, once charged by the sun, are good for 28 hours of television viewing. The villagers operated the television 80 percent of the time during which programmes were being broadcast. The village chief's son, Djibril N'Doye, is responsible for operating the set which is kept in a five meter square hut with a window that flips open, that was formally used to sell bread in the centre of the village.

He said there is an average of 50 viewers each evening. The most popular programmes are those in Wolof, the villager's language. They include the news, dramas, a religious programme on Fridays and the most popular of all is the music and variety programme broadcast on Saturday night. As many as 250 people, many from neighboring communities fill the village square, surrounding the well in the centre, to watch the latest in rock video clips from Europe and popular Senegalese entertainers.

Senegal hopes to expand the number of villages with similar installations to 20 within five years and train technicians for each region. There are also plans to create a special branch of l'O.R.T.S. called Télé-Rurale, patterned on their successful Radio-Rurale which specializes in programming for the majority of the population whichlives outside the city centres.

* * *

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, aside from the cost effectiveness of having many viewers watching each set, there is the benefit derived from the common experience of group viewing which often leads to a discussion of the issues and messages being broadcast. But in order to obtain the maximum benefit from the costly investment in group viewing centres and government-paid receivers, an equal effort must be made to make sure that the messages are being received and understood. Without the crucial calalyst of animation, television, more often than not, serves only as a very expensive palliative and diversion, which is appreciated but little understood by the people, namely the rural farmers and urban poor, it is supposed to be helping. The authors of Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance comment:

"Our experience indicates quite strikingly that informal education through the media is rarely successful unless there is a link between the media and the field workers of the agencies of social change ... If television is to justify its role in the low-income countries, it can do so only if it is used as an instrument of development; and it can be an effective instrument only if it forms part of a coordinated and integrated development effort."[14]

At this time, the development of group viewing in the countries surveyed has been slow, erratic and very limited. The televisions installed in rural areas, even in countries which have relatively wide-spread broadcast signals like

Ivory Coast and Nigeria, have an impact on only a tiny percentage of the rural population. Though it is decidely an encouraging trend to see television being oriented more and more to the needs of rural dwellers and the urban poor, it should also be emphasized that there are many other more cost-effective means of communicating with the rural masses. Also, spending money on installing televisions in villages without an accompanying animation infrastructure to coordinate and explain the messages, will be more than likely wasted, if the goal is to use the medium to support development.

Recommendations:

1) Keep the capital cost of setting up viewing centres as low as possible. Use as many local products as possible if constructing a building, storage space or seating. Though black and white TVs don't have as captivating an image, they are just as effective in communicating messages and half the price to buy and maintain.

2) Place the televisions in a public place. This could be a market area, village square or preferably inside a school, community centre or other already existing building. A shelter allows viewing during the rainy season and during the day when bright sunlight washes out the screen.

3) Make sure the TV set is secured to reduce the chance of theft or vandalism. One person should be given the responsibility of operating and guarding the set and advising the proper authorities if it needs repair. Investing in the construction of a secure and water-proof stall, or converting an already existing one, complete with a sturdy lock and key should be assured.

3) Establish a system that is as maintenance free as possible to operate so that it can be maintained by an unskilled caretaker.

4) Encourage wealthy urban dwellers to contribute to the purchase of a set and establishing a viewing centre in their villages of origin.[15]

5) Eliminate the importation tax on television receivers and replacement parts.

6) Develop group viewing centres along with a coordinated animation effort on the part of development agencies, field workers and the broadcasting organizations.

7) Group viewing meetings with an animator should be held on a regular basis to help the participants develop the habit of attending.[16]

8) Whenever possible provide printed educational material to supplement the information being broadcast.

Footnotes

[1] Graham Mytton, Mass Communication in Africa, (London, 1983), p. 76.

[2] Sean MacBride, Many Voices, One World, Report by the International Commission for the Study of Communications Problems, UNESCO, (Paris, 1980), p. 132.

[3] Diran Adegbokun, '25 Years of Television Broadcasting in Nigeria', in Television Journal, (Lagos, April-June, 1984), p. 20.

[4] UNESCO, Statistical Yearbook 1978-79, pp. 873-874.

[5] U.S.A.I.D. and Development Communications, Summary Table, (Washington, 1984), p. 2.

[6] Graham Mytton, 'Listening, Looking and Learning', Institute for African Studies, (Lusaka, 1971), in Mass Communication ..., op. cit., p. 76.

[7] "Analysis of the viewer", Nigerian Television Authority Handbook, 1981, (Lagos, 1981), p. 70.

[8] Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner, Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance, (London, 1978), p. 187.

[9] Vasant Sathe, 'How Satellites will extend India's development communications' in Intermedia, (London, September, 1981), pp. 37-40.

[10] Katz, Broadcasting ..., op. cit., p. 202.

[11] 'Côte-d'Ivoire 1971: un échec imprévu' in L'Ecole et la Télévision: un double jeu de Sociétes, Problems Audiovisual, INA, (Paris, September-October, 1982), p. 22.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Theresa Silverman, Télé-Niger: Adapting an Electric Medium to a Rural African Context, (Washington, 1976), p. 5.

[14] Katz, Broadcasting ..., op. cit., p. 188.

[15] 'Daily Times Opinion: Television Viewing Centres', idea originally proposed in Nigeria by Major-General Tunde Idiagbon, Chief of Staff, Supreme Headquarters, Daily Times, (Lagos, November 6, 1984).

[16] Heli Perrett, Using Communication Support in Projects: The World Bank's Experience, (Washington, D.C., 1982), Amer IV, p. 3.

Field Animation
and a Mixed
Media Approach

When educational television was first developed in Africa 20 years ago, it was seen as the ultimate panacea. The medium was expected to bring light to the dark continent and by educating the masses, usher the budding African nations into the mainstream of 20th century life.

Today we see that the power of television to influence attitudes and actions on it's own was greatly exaggerated and the experiments with formal and non-formal educational television have ended mostly in disappointment.

Numerous scholars, including Graham Mytton, the author of Mass Communications in Africa, agree that television and other mass media can be effective in providing information about development to the public, but they also believe that interpersonal channels of communication are more effective in helping to form and change attitudes towards development. Mytton writes: "Perhaps when the object is persuasion, we should largely depend on word of mouth channels rather than mass media. This is why in a number of countries encouragement has been given to mass media campaigns combined with small, organized groups under carefully selected leadership."[1]

A television or radio programme may introduce a farmer to the idea of planting a different variety of maise but unless there is an agricultural agent, a village chief, another farmer or someone else he trusts encouraging him to make the change, there is very little chance he will act on his own. He might be impressed by the progress made by others seen on television but usually he has difficulty identifying their progress with his actions.

Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner write in Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance:

"Modernizing campaigns aimed at achieving change in the relatively short run depend on communications systems that combines the efficient diffusion of information with opportunities for reinforcement, discussion and feedback. These opportunities require the use of trusted agents of influence in addition to the mass media. The performance of the broadcast media in the fields of development, as in education, depends on two factors: the amount of attention given to development problems by the mass media and the extent to which these development efforts are linked with the agents of change in the field."[2]

Films, slide shows, flannelographs and posters are potent tools for development field workers. Combined with the mass media -- radio, television and, to a lesser degree, newspapers -- the chances of reaching the largest number of people possible and affecting change is greater.

Development Support Communications planners are no longer putting their eggs in one media basket but are carefully examining the widest array of communications channels available and plugging their message into as many as possible.

Television and radio are seen more and more as the harbingers of development information: offering a large-scale introduction to a particular vehicle for change and paving the way for field workers equipped with smaller media to provide the details and guide the progress.

Ignacy Waniericz, writing in La radio-télévision au service de l'éducation des adultes, suggests that it is essential to combine television and radio with other media to communicate development messages effectively.

"A systematic approach involves, first, determining the objectives of the campaign, then determining how to employ the means to obtain these objectives and the communication vehicles to be used to ensure a responding action. This assumes the use of several different media to complement the mass media of radio and television, and the development of an integrated approach.

It is essential to have an effective inter-face between each part of the system with the others.[3]

In this chapter we will look at several development support communications projects which have successfully integrated field animation with television and other big and small media.

* * *

The general manager of Nigeria's first television station, Nigerian Television Authority-Ibadan, is a strong believer in the need to coordinate television "enlightenment" programming with the work of various government Ministries in the field. Bayo Sanda, who is also a traditional chief, thinks a lot of money is being wasted on producing "beautiful programmes" for a television audience that forgets quickly what it has seen, because there is no accompanying animation to ensure the message gets through. He said plans were made at one time in Nigeria to establish a network of field workers to animate group viewing in the villages with government televisions but they never got off the ground.

Chief Olahanloye Akinmoyede of Lalupon, a village with a television group viewing centre near Ibadan, Nigeria, complains that much of the interesting and valuable programming seen by the villagers is not understood because no one is there to explain it.

"We would like to have someone answer questions. After seeing it we could discuss it. Even though many are watching it they don't understand. They don't know the meaning. I sometimes call them together and try to explain it. But it would be better if some people could come who know about the programmes before and talk to us after."

Niger, Ivory Coast and Zaire have all had some experience with the use of "animateurs" in the field, coordinating mass media campaigns. "Les Centres d'écoute" or listening centres have been established in a number of communities in Niger. The centres are responsible for organizing radio and television listening groups, dispensing audio-visual materials and equipment to extension workers and organizing debates following films and television broadcasts. The centres are also sent radio and television programme listings, including the subject matter whenever possible, once a year.

The centres are equipped with tape recorders to record questions in the field which are forwarded to Le Ministère de Développement Rurale in Niamey. The information is used to guide other media campaigns and television and radio productions. Though the information ultimately fed back to the television and radio producers is useful, the impact of the centres is very limited because there are only 20 of them and the "animateurs" are all volunteers.

Animation was supposed to be an integral part of the adult education part of the massive educational television project in Ivory Coast. The schools were opened in the evenings for adults and teachers were given instructions on how to lead discussions following various rural development-related broadcasts. There were 20,000 televisions placed in 70 percent of the schools covering most areas of the country.

Ute Deseniss Gros, a UNICEF Development Support Communications officer in Abidjan, worked with the Ivorians on the Télévision Extra-Scolaire -- the Ministère de l'Education division charged with the non-formal education of adults by television. During the experiment, testing proved that without interpersonal communications following televised programmes, the villagers quickly forgot what they had seen on their televisions.

The animators were responsible for filling out evaluation sheets and sending them back to the Extra-Scolaire programme producers. This information, according to Extra-Scolaire production chief George Ketta, was important for the producers. From it they learned what formats worked, what was comprehensible to the villagers and what programmes were worth repeating.

The problem with the system was that the teachers felt they should be paid a supplement for working with the adults in the evenings and they eventually became disinterested in volunteering their services. The teachers didn't have time to prepare their lessons for the next day and were often tired after a day of teaching the children. Eventually the animation aspect of the project fell apart and stopped completely when the whole educational television structure was dismantled in 1981.

L'Office Nationale de la Promotion Rurale (L'ONPR), the division of the Ministère de Développement Rurale responsible for education, is in the process of picking up the pieces of the defunct experiment with educational television. Luc Bro Iridjé who is in charge of training and animation for the ONPR, thinks that television tends to "pass over the heads of villagers" and will only play a secondary role in the new structure. The accent will be on multi-media information campaigns. However, the ONPR will be taking the 20,000 government-owned televisions which are currently being stored in the schools and placing them in villages that don't have schools as well as those that do.

The ONPR has hired and placed 50 animators in rural villages in northern Ivory Coast. Each animator serves 12 villages and is equipped with a car, a 16 mm film projector, a slide projector and a small generator. The idea is to take a major theme such as the promotion of vaccinations, or family financial planning, and run a multi-media campaign. Films would be produced and shown on ONPR's television program "Promo Village" and on "Télé Pour Tous", the only remaining Ministère de la Education broadcast. Radio programmes on the same themes would be prepared as well as booklets and newspapers, popular singers would record songs on development themes and the ONPR distribute them on audio cassettes.

Also, the existing administrative infrastructure, including the sous perfects or district governors and the village chiefs, will be asked to become involved in the campaigns and give advice to and work with the animators.

A major complaint of the villagers with the Télévision Extra-Scolaire was that they had difficulty understanding the messages because they were too packed full of information or were in French. They also felt that many of the topics that were treated on the broadcast were simply not relevant to them. L'Office Nationale de la Promotion Rurale now plans to decentralize its communications in order to respond more directly to individual village needs. The extensive library of films dealing with rural development produced during the 10 years of the educational television project is being made available to the villages through the ONPR animators.

The animators will find out what problem the villagers want to deal with, show the films on that topic, lead discussions on the content, answer questions and help them choose a course of action. By bringing films specifically asked for by the villagers, showing the same film twice to the same audience and having the animator outline the subject matter in the local language or dialect, greatly enhances the communication.

The animators also communicate the needs of the villagers, and the effectiveness of the various films and the media campaigns back to officials at the ONPR in Abidjan. Iridjé maintains that it is cheaper and ten times more effective to pay an animator and equip him with a car and projector to serve 15 villages than to install and maintain 15 televisions in those same villages.

The first multi-media campaign run by the ONPR since the new structure was established was on the importance of rural women to the economy. The campaign was aimed at reducing the domestic responsibilities of women by establishing village day care centres and forming women's co-operatives.

In the initial stages of the campaign, seven centres were opened, but a lack of co-ordination greatly reduced the campaign's effectiveness. For example, though the Ministère de la Condition Fémenine also has a television programme and animators in the field, there was no effort made to coordinate the communications work of the two ministeries. The Ministère de Education, which produces "Télé Pour Tous" does not have any structural relationship with the ONPR and only participates in the campaigns haphazardly.

Finally, the ONPR has had difficulty finding animators who can read and write to work in the villages because the salaries being offered are relatively low. In fact, financial constraints have reduced the effectiveness of the whole project and though there areplans to cover the whole country within 5 years, it will take an estimated $900 million (U.S.) to do it.

To further illustrate the necessity and effectiveness of an integrated approach to development support communications in which various communications media, governmental and non-governmental organizations and extension agents and community groups all work together, let us look at the "Santé Pour Tous" experience in Zaire.

"Santé Pour Tous" is a primary health care and preventative medicine project sponsored by Zaire's Departmente de la Santé Publique, USAID, and administered by a church group: l'Eglise du Christ du Zaire (ECZ). Also under the "Santé Pour Tous" umbrella is SANRU 86, a rural health services organization, a nutrition and agricultural promotion project, a vaccination campaign and a family planning project.

The planners of these different projects decided that, because of the absence of any coordinated effort in the use of communications in the non-formal education of adults in the past, there had been a lot of duplication of effort which ended up confusing those the information was supposed to be helping. To facilitate the coordination of the communications activities of the various participants, the organizations have representatives who sit on each other's boards. All the planners agree that this high degree of coordination is necessary if a coherent, bottom-up approach is going to work.

The "Santé Pour Tous" program operates 50 rural health zones across Zaire. Each health zone is centered around a hospital and field office. Each office is equipped with battery-powered film and slide projectors. (There are plans to integrate solar power in the near future.)

The goal is to train nurses, birth attendants and village health workers for each village in the 50 rural health zones in primary health care and development support communications (DSC) techniques.[4] Once trained, the health workers at the village level put to use the DSC materials in stock at the field offices. Also, Community Development Committees have been established in many of the villages in the rural health zones to coordinate the various campaigns and projects at the local level.

Each committee decides what problem it wants to tackle and what DSC materials it plans to use to communicate with the villagers. For example, the committee in

Kindamba, a village on the train line west of Kinshasa, had been instrumental in organizing the construction of a "Centre de Santé" and convincing 85 percent of the women in the community to have their babies there. After seeing a film and slide show on water-borne diseases, the citizens also decided to build a simple but efficient filtration system at their water source.

MBenza Zuzolo, the vice president of the committee, once a month, volunteers his time and walks as far as 15 kilometers to one of the 12 neighboring villages to talk about the success his village has had reducing intestinal worms and malaria, and discussion of alchoholism and family planning, among other topics. He often carries with him flip-charts and other visual aids. This process is being repeated in the other health zones as well.

Florence Galloway, the training coordinator of the project, points out that the capacity to deliver materials to the field is greatly speeded up by using materials, such as slide shows, filmstrips, flannelographs and so on, that already exist. Pains are taken to ensure that the material is up to date and relevant and each item is pre-tested by communications specialists at the village level to see what message is perceived.

Emphasis has also been put on using local cultural strengths to communicate "Santé Pour Tous" messages. Plays, songs and role playing have been integrated into the training programs. Mrs. Galloway believes that modern communication techniques are important but machines break down where as a popular song can endure for years.

Of all the DSC materials made available, the flip charts and flash cards have enjoyed the most widespread use. As many as 60 percent of the village level nurses are using them. Yoluki Itoko, a DSC field worker with the "Santé Pour Tous" project, says he has had a lot of success presenting slide shows in the villages. He likes working with slides because of the flexibility they offer. He can gear each presentation to the needs of each village and discuss the images at the villager's pace. By contrast, he has found films to be less effective because of the set pace of the narration and filmstrips can't be manipulated to ensure that each image is relevant. Though each field office has a repairman capable of doing minor repairs, the project has run into problems with the batteries used to power the projectors. Solar powered batteries have been ordered to, hopefully, improve the situation.

The electronic mass media has had a rule to play. Ratelesco, the educational radio and television division of "La Voix du Zaire" has co-produced both programmes and series with several "Santé Pour Tous" organizations including CEPLANUT, the nutrition and agricultural project, and church groups. In most cases the organizations paid for the materials, such as video cassettes, transportation and lodging for production staff in villages and offered consultants to develop the content.

CEPLANUT conducted a survey after a television series it sponsored was broadcast. It found that, though 25 percent of Zaire's population lives in areas where television signals can be received, only two out of 10 households in those areas had televisions. By comparison 6 out of 10 had radios. It also found that many of Ratelesco's educational programs were aired at times that were inconvenient for the target audiences. But despite these limitations, the television production capacity of INANDES, a Catholic-sponsored education resources centre and l'Eglise du Christ du Zaire, both major producers of "Santé Pour Tous" DSC materials, is being improved with new equipment.

Finally, by making DSC supported training the most important part of "Santé Pour Tous", the planners hope that the project will make a long-lasting contribution long after the existing structures have run their course.

* * *

More and more African governments are realizing the shortcomings of television as an educator and are looking at other ways of communicating development messages to their citizens and getting feedback from them. The idea of integrating and coordinating the efforts of a variety of media with those of the agents of change is a relatively new one and has not yet been applied on a large scale.

To be sure, ensuring that the various components of African societies promoting development work together, instead of at cross-purposes, has got to be one of the priorities for those wishing to develop effective Development Support Communications.

Television's role in the context of Development Suport Communications has to be examined in great detail, considering that it is widely considered the least effective media for non-formal education in Africa and by far the most expensive.

Recommendations:

1) Coordinate existing networks of field workers such as teachers, agricultural agents and health care workers into media campaigns and animation of group television viewing centres to reinforce the message, stimulate discussion and provide feedback.

2) Augment television's message by distributing printed materials to viewers through the animators. TV informs but doesn't teach. It paves the way for interpersonal communication and more precise messages.

3) Until television is more widespread, invest in other media. If you go with television ensure that it is coordinated with other media and the messages are tested and made coherent as a unit to avoid creating confusion.

4) Decentralize communications whenever possible. If television speaks to everyone it ends up speaking to no one. It can't be all things to all viewers. Development and developmental education, as we have seen, is more effective if approached from the bottom up. Let villagers choose what developmental communication aids they want.

5) Encourage grass roots animators with a fair salary and/or an elevated status in their communities byidentifying them with a badge or uniform.

Footnotes

[1] Graham Mytton, Mass Communication in Africa, (London, 1983), p. 7.

[2] Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner, Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance, (London, 1978), p. 184.

[3] Ignacy Waniewicz, La radio-télévision au service des adultes: Les leçons de l'experience mondiale, (Paris, 1972), p. 50.

[4] Stanley Yoder, "Agents de Santé Communautaires" in Santé Rurale (Kinshasa, April-July, 1983).

Second Section:
Improving Television's Capacity To Educate

Drama: Development Television's Most Potent Tool

(Y) Young man: "I'm not a sorcerer, but I decided that I don't want another child for another three years and I won't have one.
(O) Older man: "Why?"
(Y): "Because I already have difficulty feeding the three children that I have and I'm asking myself how I'm going to feed and educate them."
(O): "How did your father raise you?
(Y): "Times have changed. I never went to school and I want mine to go."
(O): "You know how to stop having children?"
(Y): "I went to see someone who showed us how to control the number of children we have so we just have as many as we want."
(O): "There's not a single human on earth capable of deciding whether you'll have or not have children. It's the work of God."
(Y): "With all due respect, I think you have missed hearing about the government's family planning program which permits you to space your children and allows you to have children when you want." [1]

This discussion between a young user of birth control and an older father of 10 was broadcast in Kenya on a programme sponsored by UNICEF and the Kenyan Ministry of Health. The two principal actors in the dramatic series "Kiriboto" both following a script and improvising pass the government's family planning message using the broadcast media's most potent tools: humour and emotion.

The docu-drama, soap opera, téléfeuilleton or novela is considered by all broadcasters the best format for communicating development information. By creating a realistic setting, with which characters and situations viewers can identify, the level of communication is greatly enhanced.

One producer in Zaire described drama as the "soft sell of educational programming." By diverting, entertaining and informing all at the same time, this format is allowing "the devil to do God's work."[2] A regular documentary or discussion by comparison tends to be cold, ephemeral and marginalizes the question by cutting off a large section of the viewing public. George Ketta, the production chief of "Télé Pour Tous", a weekly rural education programme in Ivory Coast, has done both dramas and documentaries. In his experience a documentary has to be well produced to convey messages while dramas are so popular, even mediocre ones tend to be successful.

A programme which "talks at" people doesn't have the same possibility for getting through to the viewer as one that entertains and involves him. Once a programmer is given a human dimension which creates the possibility for emotional identification, the potential audience is enlarged and the messages have a better chance of being transferred and sinking in.

For example, a doctor or health worker can appear on television and talk about the relationship between puddles left lying around a compound, and malaria. But if a drama is created covering the same material the communication is on a completely different level. The viewers can see two families, for example, who look and sound like them. Both families have little boys who play together. One family cleans around their house and mops up the puddles. The other doesn't, and their little boy ends up dying of malaria. The viewers have a good chance of identifying with the families, being touched by the boy's death and finally associating puddles with their emotional reaction and malaria.

Rural viewers will often miss the point in a documentary if there is no life in it (says producer Kintendalk Mata of Zaire) but complicated social messages can be reduced to an understandable and palatable form in a drama. As one Nigerian producer said; "Dramas are effective because they are people talking to people!"

Dramas also have the capacity to deal with sensitive and controversial topics that are difficult or impossible to deal with in other formats. Bribery and government corruption or family sexual problems like incest, for example, are not easily treated openly on television.

But topics that are normally carefully avoided and hushed up, can get a full airing if they are disguised in a drama. Humorous treatment of embarrassing topics is especially effective in easing tension and presenting material that is normally considered untouchable.

"We can poke fun at the government and get away with it while other producers wouldn't dare," said one African producer of drama. The government of Ivory Coast has given producers at Radio-Télévision Ivorienne (RTI) exceptional freedom to criticize society in their dramas.

One RTI drama told the story of a Minister who ignored his relatives, lived an opulant life with a huge mansion and five cars and took bribes. It exposed the reality of corruption in a way that a documentary never could have done.

In every country surveyed, dramas, particularly those in African languages, enjoyed the largest viewership of all domestic programming. They also are even more widely accepted than the imported soap opera and action-adventure series, produced in Europe or the United States. This is true the world over, according to the authors of Broadcasting in the Third World, who challenge the assumption that imported programmes are the most popular everywhere.[3]

Though the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation has trouble convincing advertisers that it's true, one of its weekly improvised dramas in the Shona language outdraws the slickly-produced American soap-opera "Dallas."

* * *

Soap operas or "telenovela", as they are called in Spanish, are very popular in Latin America. The 30 to 60 minute, often melodramatic, dramas make up 34 percent of Brazil's programming grid.[4] One socially relevant telenovela was combined with textbook exercises which led to a certificate attesting to four years of elementary school. Thousands followed the programme and did the exercises to earn the minimum qualification for factory work.

The government of Mexico decided to use the format to convey positive social messages that would encourage the public to identify with the value that would help them solve personal and social problems.

Between 1975 and 1981, eight telenovelas, each running for several months, were produced on a variety of themes including family planning, children's rights, parenthood, nationalism, values, sex education for teenagers, and women's self improvement.

The first telenovela attempted to reinforce the national plan for adult education. Like the others, it was broadcast at the same time as the commercial telenovela and preserved their classical patterns. The series is considered largely responsible for the registration of close to one million illiterates in adult education classes.[5]

The telenovela series on family planning is credited with motivating half a million Mexican women to visit health clinics for family planning assistance. During the run of the series the sale of contraceptives increased by 23 percent.

* * *

Of course, the authenticity of the material produced and the level to which the viewers identify with the portrayals has a lot to do with the success of a drama in meeting its educational goals.

African audiences are very sensitive to the accuracy of social situations presented on the screen. El Hadj Diouf, a communications professor at the Université de Dakar, finds that if producers don't use indigenous actors who, essentially, play themselves or make the effort to thoroughly research the lifestyle of their target audience and faithfully reproduce it, the message won't pass.

"If they can't identify with the people portrayed and their situation it won't work. Rural audiences particularly have a tendency to say: 'This is a white man's or a Cameroonian problem and has nothing to do with me.' They have difficulty transposing the experience of others to their situation."

The Nigerian Television Authority went to great lengths to ensure that its dramatic series "Cock's Crow at Dawn" is an accurate portrayal of rural life. The award-winning series, which was produced with the goal of encouraging people to leave the cities and take up mechanized farming, is filmed on location in a rural village near Jos. Though the principal actors are professionals, all the extras are peasants playing themselves. According to Peter Igho, who wrote, produced and directed the series, the production crew was chosen because of their rural backgrounds. And because the actors and crew live in the village during the production, the images and portrayals tend to be much more realistic.

Governmental development agencies working in the field are also consulted on a regular basis to guide the production. Several story ideas were inspired by the producer's contact with the village. For example, an episode was written on the formation of a cooperative based on the village's experience.

"Cock's Crow at Dawn" is being financed by a Nigerian bank. The primary message of the drama is that banks are willing to help hard-working people get into mechanized farming. The story involves a family who returned to the country after living in the city. The head of the family takes out a loan and buys a small tractor. He starts using fertilizer and wins an agricultural award. The family's problems in coping with the conflict between urban and rural culture is also dramatized.

A representative of Nigeria's Military government, when presenting an award to Peter Igho recently, praised the series for its true-to-life portrayal of rural Nigeria and promotion of agriculture. He said the series, "showed how powerfully a drama can affect a population."

Another Nigerian production attempted to use drama as a vehicle for passing a social message and ended up missing the mark. The Family Planning Council of Nigeria decided to produce a film to be shown in villages and on television that would promote family planning. It was decided that the drama would be framed in the context of a traditional indigenous culture.

A survey was done of rural Yorubans, the target audience, to find out their views on acceptable roles for women, family structures and family sizes.

The researchers found that elder family members shape other family members' attitudes and behaviour. Women are expected to be subservient to their husbands and the men tend to measure their potency in terms of the number of children their wives bear. Also, the decline in polygamy had had an adverse effect on attempts to control population.[6]

The findings were used to create a story line and a well-known Yoruba actor was asked to flesh-out the story with dialogue. The producers first tried out the drama on a village audience before filming it on location in a Yoruba village.

Finally, on the basis of reactions from field workers to a rough-cut version of the film, the final edit was made. A Nigerian sociologist was charged with measuring the impact of the film and the suitability of the medium. He measured the viewers' extent of recall, attitude change and acceptance of the filmed messages.

He concluded that the film, "My Brother's Children", had "little effect on the attitudes of those who saw it."[7] He blamed the complexity of the messages carried in the film and, despite the producer's best efforts, the distorted presentation of some local customs. One example cited was the village elder in the film who gave a bride lengthy advice instead of merely his blessings at her wedding.

* * *

Africa has a strong oral tradition and theatre is a major component of its indigenous cultures. There are many talented performers who entertain and inform in villages with songs, stories, poems, dances and dramatic games. Employing these indigenous cultural performers to produce work on development themes goes a long way to ensuring that local cultures are authentically represented.

Martin Byram and Ross Kidd in their work in development education in Botswana found the performing arts to be powerful tools. The performances are entertaining and popular and capable of attracting and holding the attention of large audiences and involving many people who are normally disinterested in information on development. Byram and Kidd write:

"This form of communication is an excellent way of drawing on local creative talent and persuading people about development through their own cultural symbols."[8]

These "creative forces that reside in the people"[9] can also be applied to more modern vehicles such as improvised dramas and puppet shows. Rather than follow an often cumbersome and awkward script, Byram and Ross, as well as all the African broadcasters surveyed have found improvisation to be an easy and flexible vehicle. In these performances, the actors, instead of mouthing a scripted dialogue, invent conversation using their own words. And because the performers share the same culture as the target audience and are often playing themselves, cultural integrity is less of a problem.

Ad libing is ideal for communicating in local languages which often can't be written down and, because the performances are often witty, colorful and presented in language which is "richer than the homogenized textbook variety",[10] the development information is more readily understood.

And though an improvised drama might seem a little roughly hewn at times, it more than makes up for it because of its authentic cultural representation. Byram and Kidd suggest that elaborate culture expression isn't necessary if the messages are successfully communicated because the goal is education and not art.

"This approach works well precisely because the actors are familiar with the issues and the situations they are presenting and develop their dialogue, gesture, and action in response to each other...rather than having to remember a fixed script."[11]

To ensure that the right development message is covered in the ad libbed performance the indigenous performers meet with the television producers and development specialists to discuss the material to be treated. The actors then come up with the story-line, a rehearsal is held, then, (depending on financial resources), the drama is shot on location, in the studio or a combination of the two. This modus operandi is followed by most of the broadcasters surveyed.

In most cases amateur and professional actors who have some experience in the indigenous performing arts are considered the most reliable performers. But the programme "Action et Développement" on Télé-Sahel in Niger has had great success with turning ordinary peasants into actors in its dramas which convey development messages.

Producer Kebe Ousmane find that the peasants are natural actors. He visits a rural village and has the residents act out their experiences and problems in forming a cooperative or building a health clinic, for example. The dramas ring true because the actors have already lived the experience.

Tala Ngai i Kambiauma of the educational television division of Voix du Zaire has also combined what he calls "adjusted cinema vérité." He mixes real people in their own environment, sometimes hiding his camera, with one or two planted actors.

Improvised drama has a number of advantages for broadcasters in developing countries. First, it is quick and easy to produce and inexpensive. The Television Service of Oyo State in Nigeria can produce three, hour-long improvised dramas a week with the same number of production staff and budget it takes to produce one, half-hour documentary.

Of course the main reason that improvised dramas are so popular with development support broadcasters is that they not only are an excellent way of mirroring local social reality, but because they often become the focus for discussing problems and the stimulous for doing something about them. It is this added dimension which is the key to the format's success, according to Byram and Ross.

"The performance is not the total experience. It is used as the catalyst for change. People see themselves and their situation in a fresh way and want to talk about it with others. Through discussion people can share their ideas which often lead to practical action."[12]

The problem with the improvisations is that they are unpredictable and, therefore, often difficult to record and film. Job Jonhera produces unscripted dramas for the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation.

He finds that in many cases certain patterns evolve during the rehearsals but when it comes to shooting the final version, major changes are made by the actors, catching the cameramen off guard.

"The production staff have to have a good working rapport with the actors and patience. Lines are changed or forgotten or dramatic facial expressions are missed because they don't occur at the same time or place," Jonhera said.

Because of the unpredictable nature of improvised dramas and the tendency of using inexperienced actors the biggest danger is creating chaos on the screen. A drama in the Yoruba language broadcast on Lagos State Television in Nigeria told the story of a father who impregnated his daughter, and all the subsequent family conflict. The producers accurately recreated the atmosphere of an agitated extended family discussing a problem in the court yard of a house.

But because the 15 or so actors were all improvising dialogue in a loud voice all at the same time, the viewer at home had little chance of picking any of it up, especially considering that a single microphone was being used.

* * *

But still, even a sometimes awkward and chaotic improvisation which deals with a socially relevant topic in a local language has a greater potential for advancing African society than a scripted drama in a colonial language about the love affairs of the rich. In the early stages of the development of African television the tendency was to reproduce the well-worn western dramatic themes: cops and robbers, love stories and the life of the upper class.

Even today Dr. Victoria Ezeokoli the director of programmes of the Nigerian Television Authority's national network has a running battle with producers to stop depicting the false problems of the country's urban well-to-do.

"The families we see are often affluent, have no children, the water, electricity and phones all work. When they are in danger they ring the police and they come right away. We're trying to put a stop to all that. We are very much aware of the elitism in many of our dramas."

Even in rural-based dramas the actors that are talking about drought and hunger are often dressed and coiffed like they were going to a wedding or a baptism. They understandably want to look their best on television but it doesn't help communicate with those who are less able to afford to be so well dressed and manicured.

Brazil's telenovela or soap operas focus almost exclusively on that country's middle class. The characters are resplendently adorned in fur coats and drive around in expensive cars.[13] One drama, entitled "Dancin' Days", is about the experiences with drugs and aphrodiesiacs of Rio's discotheque crowd.

It can be argued that dramas of this nature can have an undesired influence on developing countries. One researcher found that fatalism is a recurring theme in Brazil's telenovelas. The underlying message is that place in the social order continues to be ascribed rather than based on achievement. Violence in interpersonal relations was also found to be exaggerated in the telenovelas.

The authors of Broadcasting in the Third World suggest that broadcasters hoping to promote development should consider their whole programme schedule and not just their educational programmes.

"Increasingly, they will have to face the criticism of (those) who find values in the prime-time programmes that run counter to the goals of modernization."[14]

Many developing countries are trying to establish a sense of national identity while making major social and economic changes. But these two processes are often seen as being separate and distinct: national culture and conservatism on one hand and development and modernism on the other.

One reason for this separation is a rather narrow definition of culture as artistic activity, rather than "the totality of human activity within a society."[15] Broadcasts of indigenous dramas contribute to cultural revival, help slow the erosion of indigenous culture as well as contribute to modernization by conveying information on social and economic change.

Some of the Third World's most successful and popular television programmes have centered around the relationship between traditional and progressive forces in developing societies. One of Brazil's privately-owned stations broadcast a daily serialized drama on the conflict between an agent of change and the traditional leadership in a village.

The Nigerian Television Authority's long-running dramatic series "The Village Schoolmaster" also proved to be both a popular and effective vehicle for exploring the interrelationship between modernism and conservatism.

In Ivory Coast, 80 percent of that country's televisions were tuned into several dramas about fetishists who were both revered and had their authority challenged, when they gave bad advice. Viewers were encouraged to go to hospitals before seeing fetishists when sick, and get a second fetishist's opinion in certain cases.

In one of the dramas a rural family resists a fetishist who unjustly blames a mother for the death of one of her children. In another one a fetishist asks the chief of a village, which is to be relocated, to sacrifice the life of his eldest son to save the village. The son is killed and the village moved anyway.

* * *

The more African television producers who use their cameras to mirror social realities in their countries the better chance the viewing population has of seeing and understanding itself, the first step to making changes.

Televised dramas, particularly ones that are done in local languages and reflect indigenous cultures, can be an important step in the development of the pride, self-confidence and awareness needed to sustain a rapidly developing nation. And a beneficial biproduct of this linking of culture and development is the cultural revival or reawakening that can occur when indigenous culture is reinforced and sustained, instead of denigrated by, the medium of television.

There is no doubt that dramas attract large audiences. There is no doubt that social messages can be communicated effectively through dramas. What is missing in many African countries is simply the idea of using this potent medium to promote social goals. The possibilities are really only as limited as the collective imaginations of those producing the dramas.

Recommendations

1) Encourage established novelists to apply their talents to writing television dramas. They are better able to recreate "real-life" rather than the less relevant escapist formula.

2) Employ the most talented performers who are the most popular and best known. Musicians and film and theatre actors can provide status and authenticity to a television drama.

3) Prepare an inventory of indigenous media and encourage performers to participate in television productions.

4) Identify existing themes and content in indigenous culture that might be adjusted to support modern development messages.

5) Pay attention to portraying culture accurately. One way of doing this is by shooting as much as possible on location.

6) Don't underestimate the importance of having a good rapport between producers and improvising actors to ensure that both groups know what the other is going to do and wants.

7) Turn ordinary people into actors. This can be done by recreating scenes that really happened or mixing real people with a professional actor who seeds the conversation with the development message.

8) To get the maximum mileage out of a drama follow it with an on-air discussion by those touched by the problem dramatized and/or specialists.

9) Re-use existing television dramas or films, or excerpts from them, to introduce a subject and stimulate debate in discussion-format programmes. (One Canadian broadcaster follows dramas with a discussion and invites the public to telephone in questions and participate in the debate which is simultaneously broadcast on the radio.)

10) Have animators in the field organize discussions following dramas to aid people in applying the dramatized messages to their own lives.

Footnotes

[1] "Kenya: le feuilleton des familles" Problèmes Audiovisuels: Radios et télévisions pour le développement, Janvier-fevrier, 1983, p. 26.

[2] Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner, Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance (London, 1978) p. 187.

[3] Ibid. p. 196

[4] Ibid. p. 155

[5] "Social Values Through TV Soap Operas" Clearinghouse on Development Communication, April 1983.

[6] "My Brother's Children" Clearinghouse on Development Communications, April 1978.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Martin Byram and Ross Kidd, "The Performing Arts: Culture as a Tool for Development in Botswana" in Botswana Notes and Records, Volume 10 (Francistown 1978) p. 85.

[9] Ibid. p. 82

[10] Colin Low, "Media as Mirror" A Resource for an Active Community, in Ibid. p. 83.

[11] Ibid. p. 88

[12] Ibid. p. 89

[13] Gérard Lefort, "Télébrasil et viva novela (3)" Liberation, January 30, 1985.

[14] Katz, etc., Broadcasting ..., p. 180.

[15] Byram and Kidd, "Performing Arts ...", op. cit., p. 81.

Video and Narrowcasting:
TV for and by
Ordinary People

The rationale for spending millions of dollars on establishing and operating centralized broadcasting services in developing countries has been to improve communications, create understanding, promote new ideas and provoke social change.

But highly centralized, top-down broadcasting, with its vertical structure, tries to be all things to all people and, as a result, has had little success in inspiring the kind of change hoped for by government planners. Television, as it is presently structured in Africa, ends up being used primarily to entertain passive audiences.

By contrast, showing video cassettes or tapes about and even made by small groups and establishing local or community television, because of its horizontal structure, is much closer to the people, who need help and information on development, and has a much greater chance of getting them to learn how to make changes in their lives that are meaningful to them.

"Video makes possible a sideward flow of communication -- the channel of people talking to each other," Loretta Atienza writes in VTR Workshop: Small Format Video. "Video facilitates exchange within communities, between communities. And beyond this, it allows people to talk back and up the ladder of communication -- to leaders and policymakers.[1]

Small-format video, community, decentralized or local television or narrowcasting, when employed as a development medium, is designed to activate the community it serves.

By increasing self-expression, making people critically aware of their situation and promoting dialogue between groups of people and outside leaders, self-help projects can be stimulated and real progress made with the help of these decentralized media.

Because video and community television can be easily geared to local needs, languages and customs, as well as immediately involving people and providing them with a record of their activities and actions, it has a much better chance of providing development support than highly centralized broadcast television.

Small format video and community television, especially when combined with social animation, holds enormous potential for allowing people to articulate their needs, see themselves, build up their confidence and, finally, work together on solving their problems.

Unfortunately, the trend in Africa has been towards centralized broadcasting and little has been done to decentralize the medium and make it a more effective development tool. However, there have been some very encouraging experiments conducted on the continent and around the world.

* Interviews with Tanzanian farmers were recorded on videotape and played for government officials to reduce the communication gap between the two groups.[2]

* In Ghana, video helped train managers in rural areas. The tapes sparked interest and participation, enhanced discussions and inspired managers to take action after seeing the success or their peers on video in other areas.[3]

* Miners in Bolivia made their own video productions to show the positive side of a mining life and stimulate participation in their union.[4]

* A community in the Philippines had trouble getting government help to rechannel a river which flooded once a year. Video tapes were made of 6,000 people building a rock dyke over eight weekends. The tape was shown to both government officials, who contributed heavy equipment to finish the project, and to other communities to show what organized people can do on their own.[5]

* Employees of a family planning clinic, also in the Philippines, were video-filmed meeting with clients to improve their technique and rapore. The employees reviewed and discussed their performance daily. Clients were also shown the tapes which familiarized them with the clinic's procedures. Common client questions were also recorded along with answers and played in the clinic's waiting room. The communication activity "dispelled the impersonal atmosphere that once prevailed".[6]

* Rickshaw drivers in an Indian village were taped explaining why they thought they met a bank's loan criteria. The tape was shown to the bank's managers and their reaction was also recorded and shown in the village. The loans were accorded and eventually all paid back.[7]

* The same village also produced a video-film on a neighboring village's success in forming a milk cooperative. The document provided the community with know-how as well as sparking interest in forming a coop. The villagers made tapes of their meetings and on topics such as quality control and unscrupulous middle men.[8]

* In Montreal, Canada, a community group fighting poverty increased interest in their organization by interviewing people in the street on their problems and inviting them to see the video at a meeting.[9] The same technique was used in a village in the Philippines. To get women involved in a nutrition campaign,

mothers were asked what they fed their family for lunch. The tape was shown in the village and served as a discussion starter.[10]

* Low-powered television transmitters and small studios in low-income areas of the Philippines were set up to help raise the consciousness level of the communities. The project allowed the underprivileged groups to "produce their own messages from their own perspective".[11]

* An hour long programme was produced each day by the citizens of Kheda, India for 12,000 people watching 500 television sets. The idea was to get people to talk about their problems, create a spirit on the community, reduce apathy and work towards self-sufficiency.[12]

These experiments all share the goal of encouraging ordinary people to use video and narrowcast television to talk openly and frankly about their problems and feelings which is the all-important first step towards finding solutions.

The first experiment in using the medium of video to help people help themselves was in an isolated fishing village on Fogo Island in the Canadian province of Newfoundland. The government had plans to resettle the community to the mainland because it was no longer economically viable. Many of the citizens had already left and morale was low. The National Film Board of Canada started to film an ordinary documentary and recorded the views of the people who lived on Fogo Island. The film was shown to the community and a lively discussion ensued.

The community turned out to be far from reticent and was reluctant to be uprooted. The discussions led to concrete plans of action. The film was shown to administrators and the community eventually received financial help to start a boat building company and reactivate the fishing industry.

The Fogo Island process, as this new use of the media is often called, showed that a community can find its own solutions to development problems and that media can help people to articulate and stimulate discussion.

Frances Berrigan, the author of Community Communications: the Role of Community Media in Development, considers the Fogo Island experiment a major milestone in the pioneering of community media methodology.

"It showed that the media could help stimulate, and even mobilize communities. But is also demonstrated that a development project could be approached in an open-ended way. That is, rather than the educator or development worker trying to stimulate people to participate in previously decided plans, the community itself could formulate developmental goals, provided they had enough information on which to base decisions. The Fogo Project was a process of 'conscientization' of the community."[13]

* * *

Rapidly developing video technology which makes small, light, relatively inexpensive, solid, easy-to-operate equipment, more accessible to increasingly large numbers of people, is providing a major challenge to development communications. Video and community broadcasting can put literates and illiterates on a more equal footing for expressing ideas.[14] These emerging media are creating opportunities for the silent majority, and disenfranchised in society, to make themselves known.

Because the new video equipment is easy to learn to use it can provide villages and community groups with the opportunity for communicating with each other, sharing experiences and information, "without falling prey to distortions built into the use of conventional media".[15]

Illiterate people, for example, can speak directly into cameras that are operated by their peers. These people decide what they want to say and, in most cases, how it should be presented and to whom.

Media professionals and researchers play only a secondary role, if any at all, and don't "come between the people and themselves"[16] by interpreting what they have to say.

By handing over this very potent audio-visual medium to ordinary people, according to Dorothy Ménaut of the National Film Board of Canada, "an element of fairness and justice is brought to communications and the voiceless will start to be heard".[17]

* * *

There is ample proof that the development process is accelerated and reinforced when the media is put in the hands of ordinary people. It helps build their self-confidence, creativity and leads to group awareness, and provides a solid base for them to decide what changes to make and when to make them.[18]

Instead of being told by a higher authority what they should do to improve their lives via centralized broadcasts, video and community television permits people to use the media to advance their own cause and directly participate in the process of defining and implementing development plans and schemes.

Once groups better understand what they want and can do, and are comfortable with the video medium, it can be used to communicate with government and project managers who want to help them. This two-way communication channel is virtually impossible with centralized television structures.

"Video provides a window on the process of change as the people who are involved in the process experience it," Martha Stuart writes in an article entitled 'Village solutions make global community'.

"Video has the ability to quickly capture and transmit a slice of life and provide a direct communication link between a people and their government."[19]

To be sure, by putting video equipment in the hands of ordinary people who video-film themselves in what one producer calls "linear chunks of reality",[20] changes the look and texture of what is seen on the small screen. The images might seem amateurish, awkward and slow-moving at times, but this is acceptable if the goal is not the "seduction of the eye and ear but the enlargement of the eye, ear and voice".[21]

But despite the lack of slickness in the product, the homemade video-films are often very captivating as people who are virtually shut out of the mass media speak convincingly and emotionally about their lives.

* * *

Over the last 16 years, Gerald Belkin and the Institute of Cultural Action for Development have been employing video to help peasants communicate with each other and development professionals. Over 200 hours of recordings were done in

Tanzania finding out what rural farmers thought of the government's agrarian socialist experiment. Another 500 hours were video-filmed in rural Haiti.

Belkin operates on four levels. First of all, he and his international crew spend several months living with the villagers, learning their language and slowly introducing them to the video equipment and how it can be used by them to communicate with each other. Local problems are discussed on camera and the recordings are played back for the village.

"There are serious tensions in every village. But we found that we could facilitate communications with the video between people who have a common interest in agreeing and negotiating."[22]

The villagers, who are in large part illiterate, also are encouraged to record messages communicating their problems and demands to authorities. In the second level the video is used to communicate horizontally between neighboring villages. (A peasant speaking of his progress to a neighbor by video is more realistic than a city dweller explaining to a peasant what he should do.) On the third level the material collected on village life provides rare insight to government ministries, universities, aid organizations and other institutions. Finally, the information can be plugged into the mass media and interesting and informative programmes for the general population are a bi-product of the process.

To be sure, the main purpose of assembling the material is not to broadcast it on national television. In fact, the style of the cassettes is very different from what is usually seen on television. Belkin says his editing is determined by "gestures, rhythm and the course of conversation".[23]

"We look for moving words and situations and show sequences that communicate ideas through the here and now of situations. We work day to day with people in their everyday lives without imposing subjects. This approach permits us to be aware of the relative context of everything and the interdependence of elements. And it permits people to communicate things they don't easily say to visitors who are there for a day."[24]

Belkin's latest documents, recorded over the last six years in three rural Haitian villages, feature examples such as: a young farmer talking about the economic and physical difficulties of farming; an old farmer giving a young agricultural student on his first field trip, a tour of the land; a voodoo doctor talking about magical powers; a farmer talking about his father, and village women discussing their problems.

The original impetus for using video in rural development came following the realization that there was, and still is to a large extent, an enormous communication gap between those offering development assistance and those receiving it. Belkin finds that the international donors, governments, administrators and people in need, are more often than not, relying on communications based on "misunderstandings, lack of information and sterile attitudes".[25]

Belkin was surprised to find that Canada was spending $100 million on the Tanzanian agricultural experiment, but nothing to find out what people thought of it. He says it should come as no surprise that many development projects are misconceived and end in failure because no information has been sought on local conditions and no evaluation done on the social, cultural and economic impact of the development projects.

"Farming people possess knowledge and potential which is not being harnessed. Our goal is to help farmers and specialists take an investigative attitude and gain awareness of facts which need to be understood and which, when understood by those directly concerned, stimulate a more informed commitment to change."[26]

* * *

Video has proven to be a good catalyst to get people talking. A microphone and video camera gives people the excuse to express ideas that they usually have no occasion to express, according to Dorothy Henaut, who has taught video techniques to several community groups in Canada.

"Video is especially useful when people have a feeling of hopelessness, who don't talk much because they see no hope of change. Once they start talking about their problems they see they are not alone with them, which is the first step to finding solutions. An individual can't find solutions but an organized group can."[27]

Henaut in her work with the poorest people in Canadian society found that by putting the camera in the hands of the people themselves, who interview their peers, and playing back interviews and allowing people to erase the recording if they wish, quickly builds up their confidence in themselves and the medium.

People rarely asked for erasures, easily expressed themselves and markedly increased their self-assurance. One participant in a Hénaut video project suggests that "once you put a camera in someone's face he feels like an individual, no longer just part of the crowd".[28]

Fostering self awareness in people, in turn, promotes group awareness. The community media, notably video and local TV, can accelerate and reinforce this awareness and creativity. Once the avenue for people to people exchanges are opened, the possibilities are limitless for people's power and capacity to make changes.[29] They can be directed and influenced by other people with similar problems.

In fact, Martha Stuart, a major proponent of making social change through community-level video exchanges, believes video has the potential to mobilize "an incredible amount of human energy and force".[30]

"In sharing there is strength. By exchanging perspectives and experiences, (people) validate reality and the importance of a particular commonality binding them together, and encourage others (whether or not they, too, share the experience) to approach it just as openly and trustingly."[31]

By establishing a democratic information exchange, and encouraging the self-determination of goals, self-worth, self-esteem, self-confidence is raised and people have a feeling of "being doers rather than being done to" and their sense of control is increased, according to Stuart.[32]

* * *

Those who have experimented with video in a social development context in both the developing and developed world agree that there is a danger of seeing video as a miracle maker. They point out that the medium must be kept in perspective and understood that video is a tool to be used in the social process and not the social process in itself.

"Video and film reach both the intelligence and emotions of both the producer and the audience. These flow towards understanding and hopefully, motivating action. But the action is carried out by the people not by the video," Dorothy Hénaut writes.[33]

According to Frances Berrigan, animation is an essential ingredient to ensure that social action follows the communication stimulated by the video.

"Video can't do development work. It can show the needs, open channels of dialogue, establish communication links and stimulate action. But it is not a magic medium. It needs to be used with full field support."[34]

Belkin credits much of his success in Haiti with the fact that he worked closely with a rural development organization which had developed close contacts with peasants over a number of years. Without the organization's cooperation and support, he believes he wouldn't have been accepted as quickly and integrated into the development process.

Hénaut of the National Film Board of Canada suggests that a great deal of care should be taken to find out if video is the best medium to be used in a particular circumstance and that there is the necessary social support and animation to ensure that the introduction of the medium doesn't do more harm than good.

"No amount of video can replace a good community organizer, no amount of video can make fuzzy thinking turn into clear social and political analysis. No amount of video can make bad strategy and tactics work."[35]

Using video and community television as a vehicle for social change by putting the medium in the hands of ordinary people is a radical departure for all involved -- directors, governments, field workers and the people themselves -- and involves a number of inherent risks as well as benefits.

Filmmakers and television directors do not always find it easy to train people in the use of video equipment and then just sit back and let them decide what questions to ask, when and where to record and what should be done with the material, only offering technical advice when asked.

"In the past there has been too much of a distinction made between the filmmakers and television producers, who have been playing the role of God, and the subjects down below," one Canadian television producer writes. "Now we're saying to them: let people tell you what they want in a film. Listen to them and the film is going to be their film."[36]

Giving the voiceless a chance to speak is not an easy task and takes "great social wisdom," according to Dorothy Hénaut, who ran into some resistence from authorities who didn't like the idea of giving poor people in Canada the opportunity to criticize government policy.

"Certainly the success of video in the promotion of social change depends on political will. If a country wants to keep its citizens in place and the voiceless kept voiceless, then nothing is going to be accomplished."[37]

Frances Berrigan argues in "Community Communications: the Role of Community Media in Development" that the idea of a participatory approach which demands two-way communications and rejects top-down, centralized decision-making is not easily accepted by development planners because it threatens existing hierarchies.

"The video process requires a faith in the ability of a community to help itself and seems foolhardy to those who are not used to seeking the views of people before starting a development project and listening instead of talking."[38]

Berrigan suggests that those authorities who fear that community media will lead to embarrassing criticisms should keep in mind that people are going to criticize anyway and that it's better to do it openly which gives authorities the chance to learn from it and respond.

Both strong government support and thorough explanations to all involved of the goals, methods, and uses of video projects, is absolutely necessary to defuse resistence as much as possible. The clergy on Fogo Island, where the original video for social change experiment was done, tried to get the local people to forbid the recordings from leaving the island because they were convinced they would be used to laugh at the backwardness of the islanders.

In a Latin American country video was used to train farmers as part of its agrarian reform program. The head of the agrarian reform institution told the video team that he wanted maximum participation from the farmers in deciding what kind of training programs were needed and in the actual production.[39]

In one of the videos prepared, farmers were recorded expressing doubts about the wisdom of turning over scarce agricultural land to oil palm production for export, in a country that wasn't able to grow enough food to feed itself. Meanwhile, the progressive head of the institution moved elsewhere. His more conservative replacement accused the video specialists of undermining government policy and in the ensuing "recriminations and witch hunt" succeeded in stopping the video activities altogether.

Gerald Belkin is very aware of the importance of strong political support and the delicacy of community video. He was asked to leave Tanzania over a small misunderstanding with a middle level authority and only allowed to stay after the intervention of the President.

"At all times you must have respect for local authorities. They can be very sensitive to the smallest error in judgement, which is enough to risk years of work."

"But we have never had to compromise on what we wanted to do. We are not there to denounce anybody and they feel it. There might be mistakes or misunderstandings, but we show what we're doing and that we're acting in good faith. But you have to be covered. You have to have someone behind you. In Tanzania we had the authority of the President and in Haiti, of the Minister of Agriculture."[40]

In fact, it is often the local authorities and extension agents who offer the greatest resistence of video projects, according to Paul MacLeod, who introduced video to several villages in India.

"We found that field workers tended to be against all technology. They considered themselves the best conduit between the people and the government and felt that improving communication channels usurped their role, rather than enhancing it."[41]

A video project in Ghana also ran into problems with local authorities. Every request to video-film was seen as a major and formal demand, and it took staff members several visits to get permission. (After permission was granted, which it was in most cases, the officials were either not very interested and didn't show up for interviews or, overly enthusiastic and asked for as many as a dozen functionaries to appear before the cameras when just one spokesman would have done.)

It is true that effective two-way communications can cause problems for governments. When people are offered channels of communication it is only natural that they become more active, make criticisms and make their point of view known to authorities.

The governments of less developed countries are, admittedly, already beset by problems and opening communication channels is often seen as only leading to further problems.

To be sure it is easier for governments to issue autocratic one-way commands and plan development for people rather than with them. As one development professional points out, building roads and damns and breeding high-yielding crops is "child's play" compared with the difficulties of working with people.[42]

But there is no getting around the fact that two-way communication is the essential dialogue to problem-solving, according to Dorothy Hénaut.

"The communication facility in society is its most important resource. Surely a more rational approach to communications can be adopted knowing that communication has two elements -- information and response -- and without both it is incomplete."[43]

The track record of the experiments with video in less developed countries is a good one and the medium, in most cases has proved to be beneficial rather than detrimental to governments. Rather than usurp established authority video and community television has increased communication between people and their governments which, in turn, helped authorities do their jobs better.

Gerald Belkin compares making videos to building a road and government authorities, at least in Tanzania and Haiti, were quick to profit from the new route of communication.

"Once you create material it becomes a resource to be used, an object of information, power and influence. People vie for it and you never know who's going to use it because it's there for anybody or nobody to grab."[44]

Despite its dictatorial regime the video cassettes Belkin produced on rural Haitian problems were sought after by authorities in various regions of the country where similar problems existed.

Video and community television is still in its beginning stages, as a tool for supporting development. But a growing number of development communications specialists and governments believe that this emerging small media will be playing an increasingly important role.

Some, like television producer Jean Tetrault of the United Nations Information Office, believe the time is ripe to start training "barefoot cameramen" to serve the information needs for the vast majority of the populations who are ill-served by existing information media.

He points out that the first generation of African media personnel have been trained in western techniques and are caught in the capitals and doing little to establish communication links between the various elements in developing societies.

When they go to rural areas with their city shoes and video equipment there is a cultural gap between them and their subjects.

"What we need is a new generation to return to the villages and make a message and then take it to another village. In other words, use the medium to serve the needs of the majority," Tetrault said.[45]

What are the advantages of video?

1) It is easy to operate. In a few weeks anyone can learn to manipulate video equipment. Therefore, no professional middle man is needed which reduces the chance of having information distorted, filtered or censured. The medium is put right into the hands of farmers, community leaders, etc. to use as they please to express what they want to express.

2) It provides instant feedback. People can see immediately what they have video-filmed and improve on their technique through trial and error. Those interviewed gain confidence in themselves and the medium when they see the results of their efforts right away. (Their confidence is increased even more if they are given the right to erase the cassette if they don't like what they see.)

3) Cassettes can be recycled and also easily distributed. There is no need to send the material back to a city centre to be developed and produced as is the case with film and centralized television. Material can be edited as it's shot and cassettes distributed to other villages. Video cassettes are more cost effective than film because they can be reused on numerous occasions.

4) Production quality is less important in local, as opposed to national television. Because audiences are small, poorly produced videos can still successfully communicate messages. The same videos would be unacceptable for broadcasts to national broadcast audiences. (A rule of thumb is that if the image is fuzzy and wobbly and the sound bad, the person being interviewed and their relatives will still watch it. A neighbor will require a bit better image and those across town an even better quality. To show material to those in other towns even more attention has to be paid to framing, sound, editing, style, aside from the content. Of course, these criteria are inoperative if the video presented in a village is the only show in town. Even poorly produced, material can still be captivating because of its novelty.

5) It is easy to adjust to the viewers' needs. The material presented can be repeated several times and stopped and started easily. It is very portable and can

be taken just about anywhere to both record and vision. It is reasonable reliable and can be viewed and recorded under a variety of conditions and can be played back in places that don't have to be blacked out during daylight.

6) Without a doubt one of its most important advantages is that local languages are employed, which greatly enhances communications. (Interviews can be done in the language of the audience or commentary can be added to the same images in more than one language.) The mass media in Africa employs in large measure, European languages which the vast majority of the population doesn't understand.

What are the disadvantages in using video?

1) Repairs. Though today's equipment is very durable and in many cases dust proof, it still can deteriorate quickly on bumpy roads and with rough handling. Spare parts are often difficult to get in developing countries, repair shops are non existent or often charge exorbant sums for work. Projects can be delayed for months waiting for equipment to be repaired abroad or for replacement parts to arrive.

2) Importing equipment. Despite the noble intentions of those employing video in development communications, many governments still insist on charging excessively large import duties on equipment, in many cases doubling the sale price. Theft of the equipment en route has also delayed many video projects.

3) Lack of, or erratic electricity supply. Video-filming can be done with batteries as a power source. But is becomes more difficult to show cassettes on monitors without a stable power supply. (Batteries also need to be recharged frequently.) If a generator is required the economy of the operation declines and becomes more complicated.

4) Expensive. Though the cost of video equipment is coming down as the quality of the technology improves, equipment is still relatively expensive to purchase and maintain. Other mediums, such as community radio, might be cheaper, easier to use, more durable and can be just as effective.

5) Editing is the weak link. The tendency is to overshoot material in home-made productions requiring many long hours of editing to whittle the product down to presentable proportions. If there is only one video cassette recorder and the material recorded can't be edited at all, the chances of boring and reducing the interest level of the viewers is increased.

6) The technique is often manipulated by urban elites or foreigners. Because the conception and realisation of video techniques is often in the hands of international experts, there is little opportunity to develop rural African approaches. There is a need to develop programmes to teach local people how to use video.

7) Video can be a waste of money, time and energy. The argument can be made that indigenous cultural media such as plays, puppet shows and songs and dances, or group discussions can be just as effective and much less expensive. "Why have second hand discussions and animation when you can organize the real thing?" one social animator with experience in Botswana asks.

Footnotes

[1] Loretta Atienza, VTR Workshop: Small Formal Video, (Paris, 1977), p. 12.

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[26] Personal interview with Gerald Belkin, Guerchy, France, March, 1985.

[27] Hénaut, "Powerful Calalyst ...", op. cit., p. 21.

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[29] Ibid., p. 21.

[30] Stuart, "Village Solutions ...", op. cit., p. 35.

[31] Ibid., p. 35.

[32] Ibid., p. 36.

[33] Hénaut, "Powerful Calalyst ...", op. cit., p. 22.

[34] Berrigan, Community Communications ..., op. cit., p. 37.

[35] Hénaut, "Asking the Right Questions ...", op. cit., p. 10.

[36] Watson, "Challenge ...", op. cit., p. 8.

[37] Hénaut, "Asking the Right Questions ...", op. cit., p. 12.

[38] Berrigan, Community Communications ..., op. cit., p. 36.

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[40] Personal interview with Gerald Belkin, Guerchy, France, March, 1985.

[41] Personal interview with Paul MacLeod, Montreal, Canada, July, 1984.

[42] Fraser, "Adapting Communications ...", op. cit., p. 26.

[43] Hénaut, "Asking the Right Questions ..."., op. cit., p. 13.

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[45] Personal interview with Jean Tetrault, New York, August, 1984.

Formative Evaluation,
Surveying, Pretesting
and Feedback

Europeans and North Americans have been very influential in the establishment of African television facilities and the training of personnel. It should be no surprise that African programming has tended to follow Western-type formats.

This is largely seen as an error and African television is now attemtping to develop programming more relevant to the African context, more appropriate to the interests and psychology of target audiences and better designed for the actual needs of the general population.[1]

The problem is that in the vast majority of African countries no systems of audience surveying, pre-testing, evaluation or feedback have been established. The programme producers are essentially shooting in the dark and in the absence of any substantative data on which to base changes, the tendency has been to keep reproducing programming fashioned after that of the West.

* * *

Wilbur Schramm defines feedback as a communication process which "produces action in response to an input of information, and includes the results of its own action in the new information by which it then modifies its subsequent behavior."[2] Graham Mytton offers two human-scale examples. One is of a man who is writing letters to a friend who has changed addresses. Because he is not getting any feedback he keeps writing to the wrong address never knowing whether or not the letters are being received. He also says people are constantly responding to feedback in everyday life. If a person says something which is not understood, a good communicator will react and adjust by saying the same thing in another way.[3] Broadcasters too have to be able to react and adjust.

In fact, establishing mechanisms for effective two-way communications between the television producer and his target audience is absolutely essential, especially if the goal of the producer is to inform and educate. We will explore in this chapter the possibilities for improving African performance in this crucial domain.

Gale Adkins suggests that the most effective way of breaking the western mould is by developing the capacity to conduct formative research and evaluation. This she defines as being the preliminary studies that aid in the development of programme form, content and manner of presentation that most effectively accomplish the defined goal of the programme.

"In the most basic terms, decisions concerning how to reach the audience, what needs to serve, and how best to achieve message understanding and acceptance can be made on the basis of the data derived from the intended audience. Materials can be tailored for the actual users instead of being modeled after programmes produced elsewhere in the world for people of different backgrounds, needs and preferences. Assumptions and guesswork are replaced by interpreted data and empirical evidence."[4]

The general managers of the Nigerian Television Authority in Ibadan said he has little idea of whether or not his producers are reaching or even pleasing their audiences. "Since we have no scientific research our programming is based on estimates and assumptions," said Bayo Sanda of NTA-Ibadan.

The comments of Joseph Sané, the Senegalese television programme director are typical of the other African television professionals surveyed. He said there is a great need for audience surveys but those who control the purse strings don't want to spend money on it. If there is no information on who is watching what programme and which formats are successful in communicating messages to what sectors of society, Sané and Sanda, like many of their African colleagues, end up guessing as to what might work and have no idea whether it does or not.

In the past, African producers have got away with not relying on research to produce their programmes because, in a sense, they were talking to themselves. The audience was, and still is for the most part, an educated urban elite, like the producers. New pressures to make television more accessible to the urban poor and rural populations make the research component primordial.

Henry Ingle agrees that too little attention has been given to "the determination and clear definition of goals and objectives of non-formal education projects, and too much, to simply getting the project operational."[5]

An argument might be made that pre-testing is a luxury that the penny-pinching African television broadcasters can ill afford. Admittedly, the producers are often pressed to produce material on government development schemes as quickly as possible and at times have difficulty paying for blank film and video cassettes, let alone elaborate scientific studies.

To be sure, research can be expensive, time consuming and complicated. It may end up costing as much as actually producing a programme but it doesn't have to, says Gale Adkins.

"Fortunately, the role of research in programme preparation need not be a matter of full-scale use or none at all. Obtaining a research-based answer to one key question regarding how a program is to be done is using formative evaluation and reducing the guesswork."[6]

Research does not necessarily have to be the kind of hard scientific number crunching that Ignacy Waniewicz warns can sometimes "irritate the respondants and serve only as a bureaucratic exercise in paperchasing."[7]

Once research priorities are set, the questions that are deemed the most important can be given the available research attention. And the findings in one investigation will, more than likely, be applicable to future situations, and research findings will begin to stockpile. Barbara Searle, an educational technology specialist with the World Bank, believes that the best source for finding out what should be broadcast on television is the people who are watching it. All you have to do is talk to them. The more they are consulted, the greater the chances are that programming will be understood and well received.

* * *

The evaluation process can be broken into three parts: goal definition, determination of target audiences and pre-testing of product; feedback or monitoring during the product run; and evaluation and analysis of the product's success in meeting the defined goals.

Schramm believes that before particular plans can be made to develop programmes, a master blue print should be developed which takes into consideration an assessment of needs and goals, the possibilities for making changes and the resources available.[8] Secondly, pains should be taken to understand the life, beliefs and attitudes of those for whom the messages are designed.

An inventory of audience characteristics can be done through conducting personal interviews combined with careful field observation.[9] Also, field workers who are in direct contact with the target audience can be very helpful in defining goals and designing messages. They are usually situated half-way between development plans and their application.

To better understand how formative evaluation is being used to improve non-formal educational television programming, let us look at a few examples from around the world.

Several Canadian provinces finance educational television. The Ontario Educational Communications Authority (TVO) employs a dozen full-time researchers to staff its office of project research. Olga Kuplowska, the office manager, explains that all TVO programs are tested at various stages of their development. To start with, the idea for a programmes is presented to a sample in the target area to find out if there is a need or an interest in it. The researchers then meet with the production people and discuss the target audience and the various possibilities for reaching it. Formats and scripts are prepared and again tried out on a sample of the target audience.

Finally, a programme pilot is prepared and the audiences are asked what they like or dislike about it. They are also asked if the situations presented are realistic and several hosts are presented in the pilot to find out which one has the best "chemistry" in communicating with the target audience. Kuplowska says the importance of finding the right actors, guests and hosts can not be underestimated. The wrong person presenting a programme can greatly reduce the communication potential by turning off an audience. Several methods are employed to guage the test audience's response to the pilot. First of all the viewers are asked to fill out questionnaires. The answers are then fed into a computer to speed up the analysis process. Also, the test audience is broken up into small groups to discuss the pilot with researchers.

When the producers finally sit down to outline the series they have a pretty good idea who their audience is, what they know and like and how to reach them.

Kulowska finds that there is a direct relationship between the amount of preliminary research done on a programme and the degree of success it enjoys in achieving its goals and reaching its audience.

Admittedly, work being done in a relatively wealthy country like Canada is not necessarily relevant in Africa.

However, India's Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE), which reaches 2.5 million people through village group viewing centres, is a good Third World example of a project in which pre-planning and formative research paid dividends. One of the main objectives from the start of the experiment was to gain experience in testing and evaluating the effectiveness of television messages in communicating with rural audiences.

A lot of detailed studies were done before the programme content was devised. Before starting to produce programmes, the producers knew their village audiences very well, - their perception levels, socio-cultural tastes and opinions.[10]

And before programmes were approved for broadcast, several prototypes were pre-tested in villages. For example, programmes were produced, usually on the same theme, in several different formats and tested. Interviews, documentaries, drama, folk ballad and other formats were tried to find out which conveyed the messages best. Experiments also tested the structure of the programmes such as opening and closings and optimal lengths. One spin-off of the SITE project is that it stimulated a great deal of interest in mass communications research among social scientists who conducted much of the research.

* * *

Some African television broadcasters do better than others in pre-planning and testing. L'Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision Nigerienne, for example commissioned a fairly detailed study of what the general population expects of educational television. Civil servants, youth organizations, village chiefs, women's associations, along with other groups, were all surveyed. Programme planners in Niger now know the format preferences of various segments of society. The study found, for example, that women liked very much learning about the progress women are making in other regions and countries. It also found that drama was the best format for dealing with controversial topics.

However, Niger's record on programme planning is not as sparkling. Once a general programme title is chosen, no effort is made to plan a season of programmes. The individual producers present their plans for interviews and often shoots on the same day they plan to do them. The production chief either gives or doesn't give them permission to proceed on the spot.

The procedure is a lot less haphazard at the Nigerian Television Authority's Channel 10 in Lagos. The station has a research department which helps producers find out if there is enough material to nourish a series. Once the subject, format and target audience has been set and approved, the producers work with the research department in the preparation of an outline of three months of programmes which is then submitted to the programme director for approval.

The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation tests pilots for each new programme it prepares. And half the time the pilot serves as the first episode without changes.

Pilot testing involves showing a trial production or the first one or two programmes in a series to a sample of the target audience and soliciting their reactions. This is the most conventional formative evaluation device.

A World Bank study suggests that pretesting is cost-effective in the sense that it reduces the likelihood of making costly errors.

"(The errors) may appear obvious in retrospect but sometimes escape notice during design, partly because those responsible for design may be very different in terms of education and culture than the audience."[11]

The difficult part of pilot testing is deciding at what point to test. Adkins suggests that caution should be taken to ensure that testing is done before the production is too far advanced to be changed or adjusted.

"There must be time and patience to make revisions in scripts, materials, production techniques and even to do re-testing. Whatever is learned from pilot evaluation is put to use in the revision of still unproduced scripts and in adjustments of performance and production.[12]

* * *

Once a programme has been designed, pretested and put into production, the evaluation process is far from over. A continuous monitoring of the programme's impact on the target audience permits producers to make improvements and adjustments during the series' run.

Feedback is essential in a social communications network, according to Mytton, if appropriate modifications are to be made or action taken in response to information coming from the environment.[13] In fact, there are so many things that can go wrong and impede the communications process, without the quick feedback producers need to make the necessary changes,there is no guarantee the message will get out, reach the right people, be understood and found credible and/or interesting, be remembered and inspire changes along the desired lines.[14]

A good illustration of a communications campaign that benefitted from feedback is a campaign to promote the consumption of unprocessed soybeans to improve the nutritional status of the rural poor in Bolivia.[15]

A preliminary study was done to find socio-cultural information, food purchasing and preparation and consumption practices. The sample included 800 households and 4,000 people in the target area.

Radio, posters, videotapes, films and slide shows were the media thought to be the most effective for reaching the target population. The campaign was conducted in three phases and each phase was followed by a random household survey. After new data was obtained changes in the campaign were made.

For example it was discovered after the first round that very few people in the target population understood Spanish. As a result the half of the 21, 60-second radio jingles that were in Spanish were dropped and replaced with new ones in the Quechua language. The number of recipes being promoted was also reduced because the survey found most weren't being used.

The survey after the second round found that the largest demographic group listening to the radio was male heads of households and teenagers, not the target group of younger married women and mothers with young children. The radio recipe programs were dropped and the spot ads changed to appeal to the dominant listening group. The jingles developed for the third round had a stronger nutritional message and emphasis was put on the importance of protein and identifying soya as a "protective" and "body-building" food.

One measure of the campaign's success is that 92 percent of the target population had heard of soya after the campaign compared to 19 percent before. 80 percent said they had eaten soya in a survey following the final phase.

* * *

The most common technique for obtaining field data is a combination of questionnaires and personal interviews by the researchers. The problem with relying on the respondents to fill out questionnaires is that you only poll those who can read and write. Also, allowing respondents to volunteer rather than be selected at random tends to produce results and comments that are more positive than they might otherwise be.[16]

Experience shows that if a questionnaire isn't drawn up carefully, filling it out becomes a chore and the questions risk being misunderstood. If a question being posed is too general, the respondent might provide more information than is needed or wanted. Multiple choice questions are not much use unless a few questions demanding a descriptive response are included to add substance. On the other hand, questions of a purely descriptive nature if used exclusively make compiling the results very difficult.[17]

* * *

A producer can only glean so much information from surveys. The facts and figures can only have a human dimension if he himself observes the target population. Before Canadian docu-drama writer Robert Guyrek prepares a text he spends several weeks with the population segment he hopes to write about. He records their conversations and in a sense lives their lives as much as possible.

Ignacy Waniewicz suggests that producers and writers might benefit not only from visiting their target audiences but also from watching them watch the programme they produce.[18] The expressions on the faces of the viewers is a good measure of how a programme is being received and understood.

For a time during the 10 year long educational television project in Ivory Coast, the producers of programming destined for rural adults watching the school televisions in the evenings, were getting feedback from teachers who were leading discussions following the broadcasts. The producers are still preparing programmes for rural audiences but since the collapse of the rest of the project, they have not been getting any input from the field, George Ketta, the Télévision Extra Scolaire production chief points out.

"The questionnaires the teachers sent back to us were very valuable. We could see right away if we were on the right track or not. Pacing, timing, confusing images, complicated language, clearness of message, popularity of the subject matter: all those things were brought out in the questionnaires. Now we're just operating by our past experience and instinct. Needless to say it is not nearly as reliable."

If a network of animators or field workers leading discussions at group viewing centres following programmes has been established, this network offers a superb vehicle for quick, accurate and direct feedback. The animators can be supplied with questionnaires which they fill out after discussing the broadcast with the audience at group viewing centres. Waniewicz suggests that the producers and writers could also benefit from participating in the post-viewing discussions and filling out the same questionnaires as the animators.[19]

The programme producers of Télé-Niger, an educational television experiment in Niger, took the unusual step of working on programme production, as well as doing formative evaluation in the field.

"Close contact with both the goals and the results of their production efforts was maintained due to the dual nature of the duties of the team members. The task of steering the project along a general theoretical framework was performed by the same people who were creating the programmatic fuel which kept the project moving."[20]

* * *

In the African countries surveyed very little monitoring of programme response is being done. The producers contacted depended almost exclusively on viewer mail and casual conversation with friends and relatives for their feedback. As a result, producers place a great deal of importance on the letters received. Gabriel Koffi, the producer of a programme on health care in Ivory Coast, gets between 200 and 500 letters a week (though sometimes as many as 2,500 if a topic, such as sexual impotence, generates a lot of interest.)

All the letters are read and as many of the questions as possible are answered on the air and as many as two or three programmes a year are inspired by the letters. "Droit de Santé", Koffi's programme, also gives out its telephone number and encourages viewers to call during and after the programme with questions. The producers of "Le Magazine des Jeunes" has a unique way of solliciting viewer response. Each week a photo or painting is covered up except for one small section and shown on the air at the beginning and end of each programme. The viewers are invited to send in letters with their guess as to what the object is as well as comments and questions about the programme. The winner of the weekly contest is awarded a radio. Because of this simple device, "Le Magazine des Jeunes" receives 10 times as much mail as the other Télé-Sahel programmes.

Of course, the problem with counting on either letters or phone calls for feedback is that not all viewers have easy access to post offices or telephones and can read and write.

But still, when producers have so little information on audience reaction, monitoring the mail is extremely important and is certainly better than not seeking any response at all.

* * *

In the final phase of evaluation, the goal is to measure the impact of the project on the target audience. Has the programme reached those whom it was supposed to reach? Did the message sink in? Were changes made as a result?

Without the pressure of preparing or producing a programme more time can be taken to thoroughly evaluate the various target audiences and the way they respond to television. Again, unfortunately, next to no research of this nature is being done in the African countries surveyed.

Throughout the world, more money and energy is spent on a general viewer numbers surveys than any other kind.[21] These surveys are designed primarily to attract or conduct advertising and usually only measure audience size. A number of African television broadcasters do have access to surveys indicating audience size and preference.

Television Service of Oyo State (TSOS), a station in Nigeria, gets 60 percent of its revenue from the state government and 40 percent from advertising. The advertising traffic office conducts a survey on station and programme preference twice a year, as well as specific surveys on new programming ideas. For example the last specific survey was on the audience potential for a programme on the sport of wrestling. The idea was to present the results showing an interest in such a programme to possible advertisers.

Solomon Soremekun of the advertising office says that though the surveys are designed primarily to show audience strength to advertisers, potentially useful information for producers is also included in the data. It takes about a month to distribute and collect the 1,000 questionnaires. In the first two or three days the questionnaires are circulated. The respondents are asked to give their names, addresses and occupations and to get their children or others who can read or write to help them fill out the questionnaires if they can't themselves.

A month later the survey team returns to collect the filled out questionnaires and do some random sampling on the spot by filling out questionnaires for respondents. Soremekun finds that some respondents are reluctant to participate because they fear the survey is a ruse by the tax department. But generally he finds, if the researchers and their goals are clearly identified, the respondents tend to be very cooperative and quite sophisticated despite their lack of formal education.

In each survey 10 households with about 10 people in each, in 20 different villages are used. The survey teams choose villages with electricity simply because they are so much more likely to have television sets. (It is interesting to note that the surveyers go out of their way to find out what programmes are popular in rural areas because advertisers of products like beer, matches, detergent and milk are interested in them as targets.) The results of the surveys are passed on to the TSOS Programme department but there is very little collaboration between the producers and the surveyers. Soremekun says he never meets with the producers to discuss the results and Tele Opakunle, the controller of programmes at TSOS says she relies mostly on other forms of feedback such as letters and only 30 percent of her input is from the surveys. She blames confusion over the station's political direction, budget cuts, and frequent staff changes for reducing the reliability of the surveys.

* * *

Ratelesco, the educational television service in Zaire, surveys viewers once a year. Because of budget restrictions there, the surveys are limited to the city of Kinshasa. The Ratelesco assistant manager, Kitenda Mata, says he is constantly surprised by the information that turns up in the results and the surveys have helped increase audience size.

The Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation conducts audience surveys once every two years in conjunction with a local university. The students distribute 1,000 questionnaires asking for opinions on programme preferences and on television personalities such as hosts and actors. Job Jonhera, the ZBC programme director, finds that the results are used equally by him and the advertising department.

We have seen in the examples given that many of the evaluation techniques being employed by African broadcasters are well-worn Western models. Adkins cautions Third World nations of the dangers in adopting rather than adapting foreign research techniques.[22] Because patterns of information dissemination, criteria for credibility, systems of social values, as well as audience needs and interests are likely to be different in developed than the less developed countries, there is a need to develop uniquely African techniques and models.

At this point, since there is very little co-ordination between the less developed countries, none are benefitting from the other's experiences or are dependant on Westerners to interpret those experiences for them. Henry Ingle:

"The lack of a strong evaluation component in most non-formal or for that matter formal, education projects has hindered the state-of-the art development of learning systems with the result that errors are repeated and difficulties recur in education programmes around the world."[23]

Finally, current trends and technological developments are going to have an effect on planning and evaluation. For example, on the technological front, the whole gamut of changes, from fibre optic cable connections and teleconferences to two-way village satellite communications and computer-based video-text, holds the potential for radically changing the dynamics of interactive television.

This rapidly developing high-tech front promises to radically increase the receiver's participation in programme development, evaluation and actual production. The technology already exists to hook up thousands of televisions to both a broadcast centre, a computer and small cameras. The potential is there to show a documentary on a particular subject, give a test in which viewers respond to multiple choice questions by touching their screens.[24] The producers of the documentary and selected specialists, can then answer questions, posed by people speaking into their small cameras. Their image is received at the broadcast centre and retransmitted to the general audience. A discussion could follow involving the same network.

The other factor which can be expected to affect planning and evaluation is the tendency to increase access and participation among receivers through a more decentralized approach to communications in general and television specifically.

Alan Hancock writes in Educational Broadcasting International that in the emergence of community media there lies the seeds of new, more open styles of planning and feedback.

"By definition, community media, being on a micro scale, are planned and managed by their participants, and if monitored they can offer a wealth of experience of how, in almost laboratory situations, genuine participation may occur."[25]

Of course, the development of new communications technologies and community media are very much related. And in both cases, they pose a challenge to the traditional establishment of centralized planning. Hancock is not enthusiastic about the possibility of shaking this often remote and out of touch character of centralized broadcasting except for what he calls some token forms of user consultation. However, the enormous potential for community-based media to decrease the distance between sender and receiver and increase the chance for two-way communication channels and immediate feedback has yet to be explored on a large scale.

As was suggested in the beginning of this chapter, there is a growing dissatisfaction with the lack of success the well-worn Western programming formats have had in meeting the educational goals of African television.

But, before any progress can be made in developing new programming formats to better communicate information on development, there is no doubt that the capacity to conduct formative evaluation, monitoring and research has got to be further developed.

Without this crucial aspect, which has been largely ignored on the continent, television will not be used to its optimum and effectively reach the people it is supposed to be reaching and inspire them to progress.

Recommendations:

1) When dealing with large numbers of illiterate receivers spread out over a large geographical area, the most reliable way to get feedback is to establish a network of reliable field workers equipped with questionnaires. Half the work is done if an existing network such as teachers or agricultural agents, for example, provide the data.

2) Producers should have as much contact as possible with the target audience. If the goal is to communicate information on cooperatives to rural women, it makes sense to have a producer who has had some experience or knowledge of cooperatives, and is a woman from a village who visits there often and also films, as much as possible, in the villages.

3) Hold contests or draws offering prizes to winners who participate in the contest as well as fill out questionnaires. Small gifts such as buttons advertising the station, programme or campaign theme can also stimulate participation.

4) Promote the evaluation process over the air to increase awareness of the survey, the importance of each response and reduce fear of participating. Also, broadcast the results to increase the sense of participation and knowledge of the need for and use of surveying.

5) Co-ordinate the research efforts of the advertising and programming departments. Costs are reduced if the same surveys are used to provide demographic information and programme preference for advertisers as well as more specific questions on viewer tastes and habits for producers.

6) Use existing research institutions. Public opinion polling organizations or university social science departments and their experience and expertise can be a helpful addition in compiling data.

Footnotes

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Third Section:
Sectors
Television
Can Help

African Women and TV:
Changing Images and
Progress Through Access

Women in Africa are as misunderstood, misrepresented and relegated to second class citizenship in the mass media as they are in society in general. The controllers of mass media, like those in society at large, are almost all, male and tend to perpetuate certain myths and images regarding women, when the media deals with women at all.

The few women seen on African television tend to be portrayed as subservient and dependent on men, young sexual objects, or dealing with "women's problems" which are limited to household tasks and child rearing.[1]

Precious little is being done by African television to frankly and accurately reflect the reality of African women and help them improve their lives which, because of their pivotal role in African society, means advancing society as a whole.

By limiting the potential of the mass media to educate women and inspire their participation in the development process, a major tool for general progress is lost. In this chapter, we will look at why it is crucial for women, particularly rural women, to be given much more of a priority in development support television, try and understand why they have been effectively ignored in the past and, finally, how television can be better used to improve the lot of women.

Television in the six countries surveyed for this report, is catering less and less to the urban elite and trying to open up to rural Africa. The problems of peasants, who make up between 70 to 90 percent of Africa's population, are being given an increasing importance in all levels of programming.

Though agriculture has been identified as a major priority for development in many African countries and women spend two thirds of their time working in the sector and produce almost half of the food consumed on the continent,[2] they are conspicious by their absence on almost all television programmes dealing with rural development.

Dana Peebles of the United Nations' Development Programme conducted a major study of the impact of economic development on Third World women. She found that women already are an integral part of the development process because of the work they do. This fact is not recognized widely. She argues that without women, no real development benefiting all of society is going to happen.

"Consequently development programmes must focus on women in order to be effective ... If you don't enlist the support and input of the people involved in the project it won't succeed."[3]

Rural women are left with the major responsibility of looking after their families, especially in the absence of their husbands. As Aissatou Cisse, a researcher from Mali points out, rural women have the heavy task of lifting their families out of poverty but are expected to do it "without the benefits and advantages of training, instruction, financial aid and tools and equipment".[4]

According to the International Labour Organization, half the hours worked by women are not included in official statistics.[5] In fact, statistics on rural African women in general are rare. The International Development Research Centre (Canada) finds that there is a tendency among researchers to ignore women's economic activity because it is simply easier to survey men.

"Because women tend to work outside official definitions of work and are excluded from organized groups and associations, women tend to have a profile of a passive subject. As a result, it has been difficult to identify positive mechanisms for accentuating the real contribution of women to development."[6]

What is known is that only 3.4 percent of African women have any formal training in agricultural techniques though they are primarily responsible for agricultural production.[7]

The capacity to produce enough food for the growing numbers who are traditionally dependent on subsistence farming has not increased despite the introduction of new, productivity-raising, market-oriented technologies, because the role of women in food production has been overlooked.

According to Margaret Haswell, a rural development consultant, women food-farmers face a technology gap.

"Their traditional skills and 'know-how' are not exploited; they do not have the opportunities presented to men engaged in market-oriented production of access to information on improved methods and inputs, and to credit; training programs do not focus on their farming practices and their inability to accept knowledge introduced from outside."[8]

There is also evidence that recent developments have put even more pressure on women food-farmers. They already have over-charged work-loads, working an average of 10 to 16 hours a day and spend large amounts of time carrying water and searching for increasingly scarce firewood and, of course, handling all the domestic tasks, such as food preparation and child-care.

Men have traditionally helped women farmers with the big jobs such as fence building, soil preparation, harvesting and transportation. But women are handling the farming work-load completely on their own more and more as their husbands leave the villages to seek work elsewhere.

Not only are women often ignored or left out of rural development schemes, but there are indications that some development projects have worked against the position of women by increasing their workload and reducing their access to paid work.

A case in point is a major resettlement scheme in Bukina Fasso. A study found that though women were overburdened with work in the fields, men were granted the rights to the income from crop sales. The women also lost their previous rights to land for growing food for the family and there were no markets for them to sell their surplusses which cut off their major source of income.

"Most of these problems stemmed from a lack of understanding of women's role and their exclusion from the project planning and benefits," Dana Peeples writes. "As this case demonstrates, while development assistance brings benefits to male project participants, in some cases, it may actually worsen the situation of women."[9]

The net result of all this, according to Haswell, is that women are left with increasing workloads, using out-moded practices, pushed onto poorer soils, and are expending greater amounts of energy for less results.

"It can be postulated that the greater the proportion of energy supplied by women under these conditions in the production of food, the more uncertain is it that the subsistence requirements of family households can be met."[10]

* * *

The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations is encouraging the participation of rural women in all levels of education as a long-term solution to the rural development problem. The FAO also advocates increasing the number of female extension agents working in the field. One FAO paper states:

"In the field of training, like the agricultural sector in general, the challenge is to use all the human and material resources available. There is no excuse in ignoring any resource especially those which promise to help half the population of the world."[11]

Codou Bop, a professor at CESTI, the communications school at the Université de Dakar, is an ardent critique of the way women are treated by the mass media in Africa. She believes that the media, particularly the audio-visual media, can play a major role in the education of women.

"The media can teach women how to improve their lives, circulate scientific information and promote those who are the most marginal in our societies: namely, rural women. But the media, far from playing a supportive role, perpetuates a negative image of women when it is not ignoring them completely."[12]

In a study of women and the media in Africa, Bop found that despite the irreplacable role women play in the national economies in Africa they are often seen in the media as socially and economically dependent as children, as being dominated by their sentiments and with no other status than that of wife and mother.

In another study, this one by Cameroonian journalist Jacqueline Abema NLomo, two images of women were found to be repeatedly portrayed in the African media. One is of the dedicated, hardworking good mother and faithful wife and the other is the young, beautiful sex object who is either unfaithful or a prostitute. Neither one is given any opportunity to speak their minds.

"Women are not forgotten by the media," NLomo writes of the second type. "They are put up front, exaggerating their most feminine side which is the most superficial and dehumanizing."[13]

The way women are portrayed in fiction and dramatizations is particularly important because of the major impact this form of communications has on large numbers of people. In the countries surveyed, the television dramas observed, in many cases, followed the pattern of women found to be portrayed in photoroman picture books in Senegal.

"All the action revolved around the men. The heroine represents purity and is ready to sacrifice all for the hero. The women are materially rich and live a western life-style. If they work they are secretaries and are shown to be more interested in office romance than office politics.

"They tend to be young, elegant, always changing clothes, shopping and wearing the latest fashions and make-up. They are given the characteristics of victims, like children, incapable of taking their own initiative without the aid of a man, sexual objects, totally irresponsible and preoccupied by sentimental problems."[14]

Bop concluded in her study of women and the media that the only women who are shown to be successful in the African media are those who have embraced modern life and western cultural values represented by the purchase of imported material goods and the cultivation of individualism and the promotion of the nuclear family.

And how are rural women represented in the African media? They are seen as "eternal victims of natural catastrophy" and often referred to paternalistically or "paraded in front of cameras and microphones to dance and sing".[15] They are almost never asked their opinions, according to Bop.

"The hard-working peasants, who are running their families, small farms and commercial enterprises don't exist for the media in Africa. They are seen as illiterates without resources, unable to buy the products pushed by the media."[16]

* * *

To appreciate the difficulties in reaching rural women with development messages it is interesting to listen to what the women themselves have to say about education and the media. The Zimbabwe Women's Bureau conducted a three month survey of 3,000 rural women representing all age groups and regions of the country.

The women interviewed for the report "We Carry a Heavy Load: Women in Zimbabwe Speak Out", identified education as an important means for improving their lives economically and socially. They also regretted that they, for the most part, had little opportunity for education when they were young and were limited by lack of time or opposition from husbands now.

"We need to be taught farming methods to overcome our farming disadvantages. Also, we have no family planning knowledge and we must at least be taught about this," one woman said.[17]

"Some women are not allowed by their husbands to go for schooling or to attend courses. The husbands say it is wasting time," another added.

The women said they get most of their information from word of mouth because they were unable to travel because of poor roads and the almost total absence of mass media except for the occasional radio. However, they did express an interest in learning about what women are doing in other parts of the country.

"We would like to see projects being done by other women and share ideas. We would like to even go out of this country and see what women are doing in other countries," one woman said. Some of the women had radios at home but couldn't affort batteries and complained that programmes for women were often broadcast when they were away working in the fields. But the women thought radio might be a good way of picking up new information.

"We need radios in our clubs so that we can listen to different programmes." They liked the idea of posters, picture-books and comic books that they could understand without being able to read. Many of the women interviewed said they had never seen films or television. However, one woman who had seen a film suggested that there was a great need to show more films to more women.

"We have seen a film. But we need to see many more. We need films on hygiene for example and on farming methods."

* * *

The biggest difficulty in reaching women, both rural and urban women, is that they spend so much of their waking hours working, there is little time left for the "recreation" of listening to or watching television. A television programme for women in Lagos, Nigeria was dropped from the schedule because it failed to attract much of an audience. It was broadcast at 6:30 p.m. when women are generally preparing food.

In N'Zikpli, Ivory Coast during the broadcast of a programme on child care and nutrition about 40 men and no women watched the government installed solar-powered television in the village centre. Women could be seen in their compounds cooking and washing children. When they took a moment to rest they sat and talked among themselves.

Chief Olahanloye Akinmoyede of Lulupon, Nigeria said women have never taken much of an interest in television in his village because they are so busy. But, he adds, the men are faithful watchers of the programmes for women and, though they were slower than the boys in developing the habit of watching television, the girls in the village are now avid viewers.

There are other problems as well. In Moslem countries there are not always provisions made for a separate section in group viewing centres for women which effectively eliminates any possibility of them watching because of the taboos against men and women sitting together. Also, most televisions in rural communities are locked up in a secure place and only brought out when the owner, almost always a man, chooses to operate it.

The UNICEF office in Abidjan commissioned a study to find the best means of of communication to reach women with messages about health care. The study concluded that none of the mass media can be considered very effective because very few women are touched by radio and television and because of the large number of illiterate women, which rules out the printed word.

The study, which was based on a sample of 48 villages and 331 respondants, concludes that organizing women's discussion groups and feeding information to women's groups that already exist is the most effective means to communicate messages to rural women.

As we have seen, there is a pressing need for women in African society to learn more about themselves in order to improve their lives and, in turn, the lives of those around them. Women broadcasters are producing programmes, for the most part, that are not contributing much to help the majority of women better understand themselves, especially rural women. However, there are some notable exceptions.

In Senegal, during the late sixties, UNESCO sponsored an experiment which managed to get the most out of both group discussions and an audio-visual medium: namely television.

Télé-Clubs were established in 13 working class neighborhoods in Dakar. Two programmes a week on a wide variety of topics were broadcast on Office de Radiodiffusion Télévision du Senegal (ORTS) and followed by discussions led by an animator.

Hygiene, nutrition, treatment of illnesses, social and family order, civics, recipes, household tips such as recycling material to make furniture and innumerable other topics were covered. One of the programme's producers said the topic range was vast because women's responsibilities are vast. Several of of the programmes were designed to interest husbands as well and they were occasionally invited to participate in the discussions.

The Psycho-Sociological Research Centre at the University of Dakar followed the progress of the Télé-Clubs throughout the duration of the experiment. The Centre collected demographic information on the women who participated, frequently interviewed them and administered learning tests.

The women's attitudes about the programmes and the discussions following the broadcasts were measured. The experiment is considered to be a success because, among other reasons, the researchers found that the women "learned a great deal and actually passed along some of their new knowledge to family members and friends".[18]

Henry Ingle in Communication Media and Technology writes: "The reports on the Senegal experiment with television generally are favorable. Discussions in the groups were reported to be lively and much of the managing of the discussions, over a period of time, was assumed by the women. Attendance fell off by only about 10 percent after nine months."[19]

Plans have been made to duplicate the experiment in a rural setting but lack of funding has held back any progress. There is some hope that the experiment will be tried again when ORTS's planned Télé-Rurale gets into full swing over the next few years.

"La Quinzième de la femme" is a single-theme, multi-media campaign also in Senegal that is organized to last 15 days. Television and radio programmes, news broadcasts, newspaper articles, women's associations, and the government ministry in charge of women's issues all coordinate their efforts around one theme, which is relevant to rural women. The idea is to saturate the communications media over a short period of time to increase the chances of reaching a large segment of the population.

Emilie Senghor, a television producer at ORTS, points out that by reinforcing the messages presented on television with other media the chances of making an impact are greater.

"Our programme for women has been criticized in the past because we would raise a subject and get people interested but there would be no follow-up. With the Quinzième de la Femme our themes aren't just presented and forgotten. They become a part of an integrated whole and one of many levels of learning. It's a great way to avoid duplicating effort."

In Niger the producers of "La Magazine de la Femme" every second week video-filmed their half-hour programme, which is for and about rural women, in the interior. The programme has been receiving some financial help from NGOs to help defray the costs of travelling.

Though it has since been dropped from the Ivorian television programme schedule, the Ministère de la Condition Feminine, produced a weekly programme that "showed rural women in their real situation and gave them the freedom to speak their minds", according to producer Marie Antoinette Aoulou. Animators hired by the Ministry met with women's groups throughout the country to discuss the programmes' contents. A meeting was held once a year in Abidjan between the animators, the Ministry, and the producers to exchange ideas and discuss strategy.

* * *

In several of the countries surveyed, notably Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Niger, women can be seen regularly presenting or reporting the news. Nigeria, more than any other country, has women integrated into important management positions and producing a variety of current events and dramatic programmes that are for general audiences.

But more often than not, women have been restricted to support or secretarial jobs in television production, introducing the day's programmes on the air or to producing programmes for female audiences.

The fact that almost all of those in upper management with control over programme content and direction, in the countries surveyed, are men, has a marked influence on programmes for women, according to the women broadcasters surveyed. The complaints ranged from a general uncooperativeness and rejecting of themes the least bit controversial, to out and out sabotage of the women's work by male technicians.

"Men are not helping. They are holding us back," Marie Antoinette Aoulou, the producer of a programme for rural women which was dropped by Radio Television Ivorienne recently, said. "There are no women in positions of authority in Ivory Coast so our programmes aren't given priority. Men can't understand women's problems. So there is a need to give space to women in the media but they're not getting much."

At a conference of women communicators in Dakar recently, several television producers reported that male technicians who opposed criticisms of male roles and traditions on the air frequently destroyed or lost cassettes or turned off the audio recorder or precipitated an equipment breakdown.

One woman producer at L'Office Radio Telediffussion Senegal, at the same meeting, spoke of a programme which showed a UNESCO film on contraception followed by a round-table discussion that was prevented from going on the air at the last minute by male managers who were afraid of offending the Minister of Information who was also president of a Moslem association.

Codou Bop in her study of women and the media in Africa cites a male-produced drama in a local language which is designed to defend traditional Islamic values. She writes that women in that programme are seen as: "transgressors of that order, disciples of satan and men as the defenders of authority and restorers of social order."[20]

Women working in television have their hands full in Africa, according to Television Service of Oyo State in Nigeria programme director Tele Opakunle. They constantly have to deal with men, in and out of broadcasting, who believe that "the position of women is in the kitchen with children".

"We want to tell people that we don't want to be in the kitchen and that careers are becoming more and more important for women in the cities and the villages."

Opakunle said that it is extremely difficult for women to make it to positions of power in the competitive word of television and a woman has to be twice as resourceful as a man to make it to the top. Women working in the media in the Congo, according to researcher Rose Toyo, avoid working in television because they see it as being particularly demanding.[21]

* * *

Each of the countries surveyed broadcast or had broadcast a magazine-format programme for women. The programmes, with titles like "Feminine Fancies" and "Happy Homes" and "Family Circle", vary in subject matter and style from country to country but they generally centre around what is traditionally seen as a woman's activities: household chores, child care, health and hygiene and family budgeting.

Occasionally the pattern is broken and more sensitive and controversial questions are dealt with such as poligamy, infanticide, contraception and abortion. Two of the women's programme producers surveyed said they included material to help women make career decisions and opportunities for education for women.

However, most of the programming for women seen in the countries surveyed tended to cater to an educated, urban elite. For example, every noon television in Ivory Coast shows a talk-show for women in the French language that frequently introduces cultural events only seen in Abidjan, the largest city. Another programme in Nigeria, which is designed to explain to women how society works, one week featured a male reporter interviewing women in an Ibadan hair dressing salon.

The producers of women's programming interviewed generally agreed that they could do a better job of covering rural and urban poor women. It should be noted that African television in general is an urban phenomenon. The studios are located in the capitals, the production staffs are from the urban elite and there are few resources, if any at all, to video-film in the interior.

However, women television producers and journalists have been criticized for "making television for themselves". They tend to choose to interview "experts" in European languages, often using technical terms that are over the heads of the average viewer, and rarely look beyond the concerns of upper-class, educated, urban women. As far as rural and urban poor women are concerned, the small portion of production resources given to women is more often than not being squandered.

"I really wonder if women communicators are really interested in the problems of rural women," Beatrice Damiba, a journalist from Burkina Fasso, asks. "You might see a woman who is the wife of an ambassador on television but nobody talks about rural women. It is simply easier to cover city women."

If the majority of African women are going to be accurately and fairly dealt with on African television, the first step is to change the attitude of women producers and journalists, Codou Bop, a communications professor in Senegal, suggests.

"We act like it's an established fact that information programmes don't interest women and/or that they are unable to understand them." Bop writes in 'Les Femmes et les Medias en Afrique" "What we're doing is closing the window which is open on the world and cuts women off from the means of understanding political and economic decisions which have a profound significance on their lives."[22]

The producer of "Yeete", which means consciousness raising, a women's programme in the Wolof language in Senegal, agrees that women journalists tend to underestimate rural women.

"We need to take more time to understand women," Emilie Senghor said. "We have been as guilty as men have of thinking that rural women don't know anything. But it's surprising how much they know. They use plants to cure illnesses that work well. They know a lot and need to share that information."

* * *

Anita Anand, an Indian film maker and feminist, finds that highly educated women in developing countries -- which includes leaders, professionals, academics and journalists -- have a tendency to perpetuate the status quo at the expense of less successful women. She says these women feel that the patriarchal system has worked for them so it should work for all women.

Anand is convinced that the only way to improve the lives of the majority of women in the developing world is by raising their consciousness and leading them to action.

"What women need is to be aware of the oppressive structures that keep them in positions of powerlessness," Anand writes. "What they need is an understanding of societal forces that result in women bearing so many children, working endless hours without respite, being beaten and raped, putting up with alchololic husbands, and going hungry."[23]

Both the media and existing educational systems are doing little to help rural women, she maintains, and the drilling of women in the 3-Rs, nutrition and family planning has not provided women with the tools to understand and analyze "the true nature of social, political and economic systems that govern their lives and oppress them."[24]

But before women broadcasters can inspire women to make even modest changes, let alone radical ones, they have to either develop or have access to research material on which to base their programme content. It can be argued that the lack of research material is only an excuse for inaction and that all that is really needed is for the producers to take their cameras to the villages and talk to the women there to find out what they want.

But Erskine Childers, the UN Development Programme's information director, points out that the development and economic planners in both the north and south are overwhelmingly men. He believes that it is essential for the media and social researchers to be armed with "hard evidence" to prove that women are important economic agents who have been passed over and ignored in order to make their needs known.[25]

The Association of African Women for Research and Development (ARARD) agree that detailed research on women would help producers know their target audience better and contribute to creating programmes which "show women in real-life situations, discussing and dealing with their problems."[26]

ARARD plans to conduct research on how women are presented in the media, how women react to that image and how it affects their self-image. The women would also like to know to what extent women (both audience and broadcasters) participate in formulating content.

One way of increasing the information available on women and development is to strengthen the links between African women communicators and organizing the exchange of articles, research and broadcasts on women, done in the different countries. ARARD suggests that the United Nations Information Offices and pan-African media organizations like PANA and URTNA could help make the exchanges possible. The association is also hoping to get support from women's networks in developed countries.

Besides increasing the awareness of women journalists of the needs of women and how the media can advance the cause of women, African women in the media need to build up their self-confidence and be more assertive in ensuring that the women's perspective is heard and women are fairly presented and represented.

That's the opinion of a growing number of African journalists and producers including Marie Antoinette Aoulou, a television producer in Ivory Coast.

"Women aren't free. Men have control of the words. We have to fight to show we can do something. The problem is that most women don't feel like fighting."

At a conference of women journalists in Dakar, Senegal the women agreed that they were not taking enough risks and were suffering from what essentially amounts to self-censorship. A Senegalese midwife complained to the journalists that even though the government fully backed the midwives, the media was not very supportive.

"There is no reason to be shy," she told the meeting. "Don't be scared. There is a lot to be done. But you all just can't sit and wait for someone else to do it."

Congolese journalist Rose Toyo urges women in the media to be "audacious enough to impose," stand up for what they think is right and stick together.

"We need a solidarity among women," she said at the conference. "Alone, the struggle is lost. Whether it's the right or the left, women are being censured. But if we fight we'll always get something. When we are afraid, we do nothing. We have to say what we have to say despite the danger of censure."

There are some encouraging signs for African women working in the media. Governments are giving women's development an increasing priority and whole ministries dealing with the condition of women are springing up around the continent. Certainly, this added support offers women in the media the opportunity to overcome many of the difficulties outlined in these pages and develop information programming for, about and involving the majority of women that will contribute to enlightening them and help them improve their own lives, and by extension, African society as a whole.

Footnotes

[1] Codou Bop, "Les Femmes et les Medias en Afrique", paper presented at the conference "Femme, Developpement, Communication: Quelles Perspectives?" (unpublished) p. 12.

[2] Dana Peebles, "Changing the Status of Women in Development", in *CUSO Journal: Women in Development* (Ottawa, 1984) p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

[4] Aissatou Cisse, "Les Femmes dans le Processus de Developpement National au Mali", paper published at the conference "Femmes, Developpement, Communication: Quelles Perspectives? (unpublished) p. 5.

[5] "Les Femmes Oubliées" in *Afrique Nouvelle* (Dakar, October 1984), p. 13.

[6] "La Recherche et les Femmes" in *Le CRDI Explore* (Ottawa, July, 1984), p. 22.

[7] "Les Femmes Oubliées", op. cit., p. 14.

[8] Margaret Haswell, "Women and Food: Today's Crisis of Subsistence" in *CUSO Journal: Women in Development* (Ottawa, 1984), p. 45.

[9] Dana Peebles, "Changing the Status...", op. cit., p. 11.

[10] Margaret Haswell, "Women and Food...", op. cit., p. 45.

[11] "Les Femmes Oubliées", op. cit., p. 15.

[12] Codou Bop, "Les Femmes...", op. cit., p. 15.

[13] Jacqueline Abema NLomo, "La Situation de la Femme Camerounaise et son Image dans les Media", paper presented at the conference "Femmes, Developpement, Communication: Quelles Perspectives?" (unpublished) p. 6.

[14] Codou Bop, "Les Femmes...", op. cit., p. 5.

[15] Ibid., p. 7.

[16] Ibid., p. 7.

[17] "We carry a Heavy Load: Rural Women in Zimbabwe Speak Out", Zimbabwe Women's Bureau (Harare, December, 1981), p. 13.

[18] Henry Ingle, *Communication Media and Technology: A Look at their Role in Non-formal Education Programs* (Washington, D.C., August, 1974), p. 13.

[19] Ibid., p. 19.

[20] Codou Bop, "Les Femmes...", op. cit., p. 5.

[21] Rose Toyo, "La Situation de La Congolaise", paper presented at the conference "Femmes, Developpement, Communications: Quelles Perspectives?" (unpublished) p. 4.

[22] Codou Bop, "Les Femmes...", op. cit., p. 8.

[23] Anita Anand, "Rethinking Women and Development: the Case for Feminism" in *CUSO Journal: Women in Development* (Ottawa, 1984), p. 20.

[24] Ibid., p. 21.

[25] Maureen Johnson, "From the Editor" in *CUSO Journal: Women in Development* (Ottawa, 1984) p. 2.

[26] Association des Femmes Africaines pour la Recherche sur le Developpement, "Propositions de Suivi" paper presented at the conference "Femmes, Developpement, Communication: Quelles Perspectives?" (unpublished) p. 3.

Agricultural Programming:
Reaching Rural Africans
by Television

The development of the agricultural sector has been given a top priority by the majority of African governments. To be sure, agriculture provides the greatest possibility for national development.

Exported agricultural products are the biggest earner of foreign exchange on the continent and the sector provides 80 percent of the employment available. The development of agriculture represents for Africa its best chance of reducing the risk of famine, costly foreign aid and reaching food self-sufficiency.[1]

The problem, of course, is reaching rural populations with information about agricultural progress and inspiring them to employ new techniques to improve their productivity. This is made doubly difficult by the conservative nature of rural Africans who are very respectful of traditions and sceptical of change.

According to a World Bank study of communication support in development projects, face to face contact between farmers and rural agricultural extension workers is the best way to reach rural inhabitants.[2]

But, the study points out, despite the success of the orthodox agricultural systems, many countries are having difficulty coping with the recurrent costs involved and are looking for alternatives. The Bank suggests that the cost-effectiveness of the broadcast media in agricultural development education makes it a good investment possibility for developing countries.

In fact, the efforts of the mass media, radio and television particularly, when combined with the work of field workers who complement the broadcasts, has been found to bring about some very encouraging results.

Television and other mass media can contribute to improving the agricultural sector of African economies on a number of levels:

1) break the traditional isolation of rural society by presenting a modern image of society and making rural people aware of the need to change some of their habits and behavior;
2) reduce the mass exodus to the cities by providing an urban link to rural areas and an entertaining and enlightening diversion;
3) increase the educational resources available in rural areas. In the absence of much in the way of rural adult education, television can contribute to filling the void;
4) establish a communication structure that takes into consideration not only the transmission of information but also the feedback to authorities, through 2-way communications, information from the field;

5) train and inform extension agents in the field, Ministry of Agriculture officials in the capital, researchers, Universities and other organizations involved in the sector of government policies, initiatives and the work of each other group;
6) make urban dwellers aware of the importance of rural development and encourage them to return to the land and take up farming.

The high cost of a television receiver, which can be as much as the average annual earnings of most Africans and the lack of electricity and broadcast signals in much of the continent are obvious handicaps in using television for rural development education.

But two points should be taken into consideration, according to George Ketta, the producer of "Tele Pour Tous" a very successful rural education programme on Ivorian television. One is that all but a handful of African countries have made the heavy investment to establish television services. It is only logical, he maintains, that these systems should be employed as much as possible to inform both rural and urban people of the possibilities for agricultural development.

The second point is that even though television remains largely an urban phenomenon in Africa, the medium has an increasingly important direct and indirect link to rural areas. Information on agriculture is picked up by city dwellers and passed on to rural relatives. Farmers often return to their homes after living temporarily in cities and, finally, an increasing number of farmers live in cities and towns and commute to their farms.

Right across the African continent, television has been put to work promoting the agricultural sector and enjoyed some impressive results. Some examples:

* "Operation Riz" in Ivory Coast succeeded in making the country self-sufficient in rice production in two years. Television broadcasts supported by other media and extension workers contributed to making the public aware of the campaign and taught rice farming techniques. When the campaign ended two years later, rice production fell.

* Millions of trees were planted in Burkina Fasso following a multi-media campaign that involved television programming on the utility of trees, their role in rainfall and soil conservation.

* A teacher in a small village near Niamey, Niger credits the government-

sponsored, solar-powered television with informing and inspiring farmers in his area to take up vegetable gardening. "Television gave them the initiative and explained to them how to do it." He said they were particularly impressed when they saw tons of seeds from France being unloaded from boats.

* Coffee production increased in Ivory Coast following a television campaign to encourage farmers to prune their plants to regenerate them. Images of plants before and after pruning and the government paying farmers who missed a harvest to prune were shown.

* In Nigeria a well-produced dramatic series filmed entirely on location in a village tells the story of an urban family which returned to its village to take up mechanized farming. The drama's producers work closely with extension agents to ensure accuracy in the portrayals.

* The progress of Zimbabwean school children as they learn agricultural techniques while they work their school garden is monitored by an agricultural television programme.

* In several countries, including Zaire, model farms are found and the farmers invited to explain their techniques and the reason for their success followed by comments by agricultural experts.

There is no doubt that television can contribute to bringing about progress in agriculture. It increases awareness of particular agricultural programmes and campaigns, stimulates interest among those who see television and those to whom the information trickles down, adds credibility to the work of agricultural agents and raises questions that, hopefully, local authorities can answer.

But even the producer of one of Africa's longest-running, most effective rural education television programmes, "Télé Pour Tous" admits that television has a very modest influence on actually teaching farmers.

"Television is best used to support or complement other media and extension services," George Ketta of Ivory Coast believes. "The problem is developing the right materials and know-how to penetrate the rural psyche which isn't easy considering the increasing gap between city and country."

The problem with much of the agriculture programming seen on African television is that the majority of producers and directors do not have the know-how, willingness or resources to "penetrate the rural psyche".

More often than not, agriculture programmes consist of very boring and often didactic lectures or interviews featuring agricultural experts speaking over the heads of the average farmer employing technical terms and in European languages. A study following a television series on farming in rural India found that half the audience was made up of children and farmers rarely watched because the programmes were "not sufficiently entertaining to command their attention after a hard day in the fields". The programmes also lacked credibility because the villagers themselves were rarely depicted on the screens.[3]

Few broadcasters realize that it is not sufficient just to broadcast "good messages" and that it is absolutely necessary to communicate. The images presented and the language has to correspond to the language and culture of the target audience or very little will be effectively communicated.

Bay Bando, the general manager of the Nigerian Television Authority's channel '10' in Lagos, suggests that the documentary style, which is chock full of images and has a voice over which can be translated into different languages, is a good format for agricultural programming.

"After drama this is the least boring format," he said. "As much information as possible should be given that the layman can grasp without getting too technical."

Another format for agricultural programming was successfully experimented with in Mexico.[4] Television was a major part of a multimedia campaign that included posters, radio programmes, songs, jingles, as well as the more standard interviews and documentary reports. The goal of the programme was to create "teachable moments", or times when the viewer is fully attentive because he is being entertained as well as informed.

To be sure, there are some built-in contradictions when considering the production of effective agricultural programming. First of all, the fact that almost all the producers, directors and agricultural experts are men who, as a rule, do not appreciate the primordial role women play in this important sector. As a result, women who make up half the population and as much as 80 percent of the farming labour in Africa, are virtually ignored by television broadcasts on agriculture.

Secondly, because agriculture is seasonal it is often difficult for broadcasters to find visual material to illustrate new farming techniques or crops. A government may announce a major rice growing campaign and want television to be used to get the message out. But if there are no fully grown rice fields in existence, it is difficult for television to visually present the produce and how to grow it. To be successful, crews have to film all year around and show the crop before the growing season, which is difficult if government policy is not also set well before the growing season.

* * *

There are a lot of broadcasters who would like to spend more time in the field interviewing farmers about farming but there are many difficulties they run up against. Some broadcasters have vehicles but no money for gasoline to power them. Others have vehicles but no money to buy relatively expensive film stock. (Many broadcasters have to rely on the more cumbersome and expensive film because there is not enough video equipment available.)

In some countries roads are poor under normal conditions and literally impassible in the rainy season. Also, portable recording equipment is often too sensitive for Africa's dust, heat and bumpy roads and frequently breaks down. If there are no reliable local repairmen the equipment has to be sent to Europe to be fixed for long periods. Again, keeping mobile crews out of circulation.

Broadcasters themselves are in many cases less than enthusiastic in giving ordinary farmers a voice in the mass media. For one thing, if their programme is in a European language, they often have difficulty finding farmers fluent enough in that language to interview.

Also, a natural consequence of asking farmers what they think is hearing criticisms of government policy, something those working for goverment-controlled television services feel very uncomfortable with and much prefer to avoid.

As a result, broadcasters are often restricted by circumstances and by choice to the safe confines of a centralized studio where they interview agricultural experts in a "talking head" format, without visuals or with imported images not necessarily relevant to the local context.

And how do farmers themselves feel about television?

A major complaint of farmers who have access to television programming in agriculture is that the information presented is not relevant to them or passes too quickly for them to understand. This, of course, is the difficulty with centralized broadcasting. By trying to be all things to all people it ends up really communicating with no one. A teacher in a village in Ivory Coast said that farmers in his area prefer films to television because they can be viewed twice in a row, which increases comprehension and there is usually someone accompanying the film to discuss the material covered.

Chief Olahanloye Akinmoyede of Lulupon, Oyo State in Nigeria finds that the agricultural programming on Nigerian television is very popular with the farmers, who watch the government-sponsored television set up in the village cinema for group viewing.

They particularly like programmes on modern farming where they can see machines doing work in a few days that they take a month to do.

"They like to watch it," the chief explained. "But they see it as being impossible for them. It is more like a futuristic fantasy show."

A University-educated, former government bureaucrat in Ivory Coast is farming pineapples in Assissini, Ivory Coast. He has become very popular with his fellow farmers in the region because he records on his video cassette recorder programmes on agriculture which he keeps in a growing videotheque and shares with his neighbors. He also explains the contents in the local language for those who do not understand French.

Agricultural television programming has not made a dramatic impact on the lives of ordinary Africans just as educational television, on the whole, has had little impact.

Part of the reason that the medium has not lived up to its promise and potential to educate the masses has been a lack of interest on the part of the political leadership. However, this is rapidly changing. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization, UNESCO and CIRTEF, the francophone media association, have all received requests from African governments for help in improving the efficiency of their agricultural development support in broadcasting.

Once the political will is established and expertise developed, the potential for the mass media to play an increasing role in encouraging innovation in agriculture is good, especially if it is coordinated with organizations working in the field and interpersonal discussion.

But the bottom line for television is that relatively few African farmers are reached by the medium at present and that it is very unlikely that electrification, reduction in the cost of a receiver or extension of television signals to cover more rural areas will come fast enough to change the situation in the near future.

Recommendations:

1) Integrate the work of Ministry of Agriculture and other organizations involved in the sector under one communications roof to avoid costly duplication of effort and facilitate coordination.

2) Integrate the existing Ministry extension service into multi-media campaigns on two levels providing agents with information on broadcasts to share with clients in the field and encouraging agents to poll clients to provide feedback to programme broadcasters.

3) Saturate the target area by plugging the message into as many media as possible. Have the same, coordinated message presented on radio, television, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, T-shirts, jingles, spot announcements, etc.

5) Establish a fully-equipped broadcasting unit in the Ministry of Agriculture. This ensures the reliable access to equipment, and provides broadcasters easy access to Ministry programmes, policy and policy makers.

6) Make programming more locally relevant by decentralizing programming whenever possible, broadcasting in local languages and choosing production staff who speak local languages, are from farming areas, and sensitive to rural issues.

7) Pay more attention to special training for production staff. A new generation of agricultural broadcasters is needed who are knowledgeable about media, agriculture and pedagogy.

Footnotes

[1] Collogue International sur la Radio-Television pour l'agriculture, 6-10 juin 1977, Montreal, Quebec, Canada, sponsored by CIRTEF (Conseil International des radios-television d'expressions francaise), "Compte rendu des travaux des travaux de l'atelier B-3" on "L'apport de la radio-television a l'agriculture".

[2] Heli Perrett, Using Communication Support in Projects, The World Bank's Experience, (Washington, 1982).

[3] Henry Ingle, Communication Media and Technology: A Look at Their Role in Non-formal Education Programming, (Washington, 1974), p. 13.

[4] Frances Berrigan, Community Communication: The Role of Community Media in Development, Paris, 1979), p. 23.

A Receptive Audience for Health Care Information

After drama, light entertainment and news, programmes on health care consistently attract the largest audiences in the African countries surveyed for this report. These programmes with titles like "Your Health", "Right to Health", "Health and Hygiene" and "Education for Health" promote change in health habits, population education and nutrition practice.

In a paper on the use of communication to support development, Heli Perrett of the World Bank suggests that using communications, including television, to achieve health care project objectives is essential and has paid substantial dividends in the past.

"Experience has shown that well-designed and well-managed communication activities can contribute significantly to creating awareness and interest, increasing knowledge and understanding, and changing attitudes and even behavior, within a reasonable period of time."

In this chapter we will look at why health programming is popular, how and what health-care messages are broadcast and how they might be more effectively communicated. A survey of nine health programmes in six African countries was undertaken. In almost every case the programmes were either straight interviews or in the magazine format.

The magazine format involves a mix of studio interviews, location filming in hospitals and villages, imported films and, occasionally, locally produced dramas. The objectives vary from country to country. But all the broadcasters are attempting to change attitudes and behavior by disseminating basic information dealing with the population, health and nutrition sectors.

Measles, diarrhea, cholera, worms, alchololism, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases, and tuberculosis are among the health problems most commonly elaborated on in the health care broadcasts. Family planning and child care is also a very popular topic. This includes the whole gamut from birth control, pre-natal care and abortion to mid-wifery and infant care.

The general opinion of the producers, governmental and non-governmental health workers and several rural television viewers is that the audience for health-care programming is large because the general population is becoming more aware of changing poor health habits. The assistant director of Ratelesco, the educational television division of Voix du Zaire, Kintenda Mata, said he was surprised at first to find that health programmes were so popular. But he now sees it as being part of an overall trend in Zaire for people to be increasingly interested in obtaining information about health in order to solve their own problems.

"There are not enough hospitals and trained medical personnel in Zaire and the population has a great need to learn about health care so they can help themselves."

This opinion was corroberated by a Ministère de la Santé Publique official in Niger. He said that opportunities for formal education have been very limited in Niger, and television, with its mix of audio and visual images, "goes a long way to compensate for the deficiency in knowledge about health among those who haven't been to school".

According to Moustaphe Guaye the producer of Senegal television's health programme in the Wolof language "Wer Gu Yaram", his goal is to teach people to look after their own health.

"Our message is that the state can't do everything and the public's participation in preventative health care is absolutely necessary if progress is going to be made in eradicating certain diseases and raising health levels."

In fact, the survey of nine programmes on health care revealed that preventative medicine was the most commonly treated topic. Producers like Kemi Opeadu of the Nigerian Television Authority's programme "Your Health" says she starts with the premise that the general population has little knowledge of what makes them sick. She shows people how to recognize symptoms, what to expect from an illness, how to prevent it and when to seek professional care.

"Your Health", a programme on Channel 10 in Nigeria, like many of the other health programmes, devotes a lot of time to encouraging people to keep both the inside and outside of their dwellings clean and tidy and free of stagnant water. Proper hygiene practices for children is also a common theme.

In Ivory Coast the educational television programme "Télé Pour Tous" is credited with playing a major role in reducing the instances of water-borne disease by helping rural populations better understand the relationship between clean water, wells and filters and common ailments like Guinean worms. The broadcasts were co-ordinated with a government campaign to build wells.

Nutrition is another aspect of preventative health care that is frequently treated on the health programmes. New foods and recipes are introduced and more nutritionally balanced meals are advocated.

Nutritionists can be seen frequently on African television preparing foods, though a common complaint among the viewers surveyed is that the recipes are difficult to follow and remember and all the ingredients are not always available.

Senegal's Ministère de la Santé Publique had the national television health programme it produces film several episodes in villages showing extension agents demonstrating recipes as part of a nutrition campaign. The Ministère also instructed its agents in the field to watch the programmes to learn about the campaign and duplicate the demonstrations

According to health officials in Senegal, television in areas where it is seen, succeeded in introducing the recipes and creating an interest in the field demonstrations. However, it was the field demonstrations, after which women could ask questions and taste the results, that were considered the most effective communication tool.

A major goal of many of the broadcasters is also to make viewers aware of medical services which are available and encourage their use. It is thought that many viewers are afraid of modern medicine because they are unfamiliar with it. By following the healing process from diagnosis and treatment to rehabilitation, on the television, the public is expected to develop more confidence in modern medical practices.

Gabriel Koffi, the producer of "Droit Santé" on Radio Télévision Ivorienne, suggests that health professionals, as well, can gain confidence in the health care system they work in by watching his programme.

* * *

Just how successful the broadcasters are in meeting their goals of improving the level of education of the general public through programmes on health remains a mystery. The producers of the nine health programmes surveyed, like many other African broadcasters, had no way of measuring how well their programmes communicated their health care messages. Besides the occasional study on audience size and letters from viewers, they had little idea of how their programmes were being perceived.

However, the producers agreed that the chances for producing a programme that accurately dealt with a health problem in a rural setting was greatly increased by filming on location in a village.

Of course, the same irony exists with broadcasts on health care as with any other educational television broadcast: the people who need the information most are the least likely to have televisions. In Libore Bangou Banda, Niger, however, this isn't a problem. The government installed a black and white, solar-powered, public television in the village square.

But according to Malick Abdoulaye, a teacher in the village, health care programming has had little effect on the villagers. He said that the village's television contributed to making women more aware of general hygiene practices, and the importance of the village infirmary and having their babies there. But largely because he finds health care programming is broadcast too infrequently to be effective and tends to be "hit and miss" with no follow up, he believes television has not been an effective way in improving health care in the village. As a rule, he says, the villagers don't understand the goal of educational television. "There was an interesting programme on, where they took a traditional recipe and changed it a bit by adding mashed beans. People watched it but nobody thought of trying it. People here think television is just to divert them. They tend to watch TV and not listen. There is silence when a singer is on TV but murmuring when an information programme comes on."

Wilbur Schramm, in Mass Media and National Development, illustrates the problems involved in communicating health care messages to rural audiences by citing a film used in a health campaign in Peru to reduce the incidence of typhus fever transmitted by head lice.

The film was found not to be understood by villagers. Though they recognized the lice shown on the screen as being lice, they said the lice in the film, blown-up for clarity, were of a "giant" variety they were not familiar with. They had also often seen purple spots on the body caused by the typhus but not exactly the same hue of purple as the spots shown on the film. The villagers concluded that the disease shown in the film affected other people but not them.[1]

Schramm believes that television can be an effective medium for communicating information about health care. But, like many other authors, he points out that television can't do the job alone and the chances of reaching people and inspiring them to take action are greatly increased if health broadcasts are combined with field animation.

"In the case of rural populations, the planners of national health education campaigns generally agree that radio, television and film can very effectively support the work of local personnel."[2]

Despite this proven potential, health broadcasters in the countries surveyed, tend to work on their own. Only very occasionally some effort is made to coordinate broadcast topics with other development support communications media.

And it is even rarer still to make health workers in the field aware of upcoming broadcasts and organize group viewings followed by discussions.

Gabriel Koffi, the producer of "Droit de Santé" on Ivorian television, feels that his programme is not as effective as it could be because there is no coordination between what he is doing and the work of health professionals in the field.

"A network of nurses, midwifes, clinics and hospitals is already in place but there's no money to animate the audio-visual input we are providing."

In all the countries surveyed there were occasions where the television health programmes participated in national health campaigns such as encouraging immunization or family planning. The multi-media campaigns might include: the distribution of posters and comic books; radio and television spot advertisements plus programmes; and animation by field workers.

In countries like Niger and Senegal where the Ministries of Health produce the health programmes and completely control their content, there is a greater chance of the broadcasts being, at least, in line with government objectives. By contrast, broadcasters in Nigeria and Ivory Coast are independent of the Ministries of Health though dependent on them for sources of information. Interviews with both producers and health officials revealed that neither structure is satisfactory to either group.

If the producers go their own way, the health officials argue, there is a risk that contradictory and confusing information will be diffused because the content is not co-ordinated with Ministry efforts in the field. The producers argue that the health officials are not experts in communications or education and programme quality suffers the more control health officials exert. One producer of a health care programme complained that the Ministry of Health in his country wasn't showing enough interest in his efforts. He went for two years without receiving any word from any Ministry officials.

The media in Nigeria enjoys probably the most freedom in black Africa. Chris Elbie, the programme director of NTA's channel 10 in Lagos, says it is important for producers to have a good working relationship with the Ministry of Health and the station actively participates in launching nation-wide health campaigns.

"But if the Ministry takes over a programme the critical faculty is lost and we are restricted from covering certain areas. The way we operate now, we do what we like, and if they have a complaint they are free to come and give their point of view on the air."

Ideally, a situation where television, radio, adult education planners, field workers and Ministry of Health policy makers all co-ordinated their efforts and the public is allowed to have a voice, even if it is somewhat critical, seems to make the most sense.

This would give officials a better idea of the population's needs and reduce the potential for putting out confusing and contradictory messages as well as duplicating the work of one group by another.

But regardless of whether a programme was produced directly by the Ministry of Health or not, there has been a tendency to deal with the health problems of the affluent, urban elite. Imported films on heart transplants or diabetes might be shown, for example, and discussed by specialists. Several health programme producers spent a large portion of their programming budgets filming operations and other medical activities in fully-equipped hospitals in the capitals.

Though some of the programmes still have an urban elite bias, the majority are making more and more effort to present material relevant to the urban poor and rural audiences. Several of the broadcasters interviewed cited two major obstacles in giving health programmes a more popular orientation: the lack of suitable foreign-produced audio-visual material on rural health care and the medical professionals who provide much of the information for programmes.

The medical professionals tend to speak automatically to the elite, often using scientific terms and are reluctant to deal with rural health problems or attempt to communicate in a way less sophisticated viewers can understand, the producers complained.

"The problem we have here is that too many of our experts speak over the head of our viewers," Tala Ngai i Kambiauma, an educational television producer in Zaire said. "The Doctors don't have the same goals as us and tend to stay at the scientific level. We tell them to speak simply before being interviewed but they find it difficult."

And even if a health professional is a good grass roots communicator in a European language, only a small percentage of the population, 6 percent in Niger for example, might understand it. If health broadcasts are done in various African languages, the producers complain that they have difficulty finding people to interview who have the right information on health care and the capacity to communicate in several African languages.

Innovation and creativity, however, can make up for some of the difficulties mentioned here. A good example is a programme on the Television Service of Oyo State in Nigeria called "Ilera". It has a unique approach to reducing the gap between urban and rural medicine. Each week a traditional healer, a herbalist and a modern doctor are invited to the TSOS studios to discuss how each one would go about treating a particular ailment such as burns, migraines or diarrhea. They discuss symptoms, give their own interpretations of cures, then comment on each other's approaches.

"We feel our programme meets a social need for people to compare traditional and modern medicine. Instead of competing we try to blend the two together so they can work hand in hand," Segun Ilupeju, the programme's producer said.

* * *

Few of the broadcasting professionals interviewed had any special training in health care or developed pedagogical skills. They also complained of having to work with severe budget restraints, which limited the amount of video-filming they did outside the studio.

As a result, the health care programmes which were observed, were often very dull (in many cases consisting of simply two or three people talking in a studio), hurriedly put together and not very useful as an educational tool.

In fairness to the broadcasters, there is some good production talent in the countries visited that, with further training and organizational support, can contribute greatly to improving health programme quality. In fact, all the parts needed to make television health care broadcasting more responsive to people, who need the information to improve their lives, exists in all the countries surveyed.

* Some excellent production talent exists in each of the countries surveyed that only needs to be reoriented through in-service training and provided with the resources necessary to do a better job.

* Viewers have shown their interest in learning more about preventative and primary health care in order to help themselves.

* There is a country-wide network of health-care workers available to help broadcasters be more responsive to viewers' needs by providing feed back and group animation in the field.

* Organizations like URTNA, the African broadcasting co-operative, and the Pan African News Agency are giving broadcasters in various African countries the opportunity of learning what their neighbors are doing in the health care field.

* International organizations are offering in-service training for broadcasters to help them improve their skills as non-formal educators.

But in order to put all the parts together and ensure that more effective health care programming is developed, decisive action by political leaders is absolutely necessary. There are some encouraging signs. Many of the Health ministries surveyed are taking more of an interest in development support communications of all kinds and would like to get more out of their governments' large investment in television.

This might lead to a change in the orientation of broadcasting systems toward non-formal education and increased financial and moral support for health broadcasters.

Recommendations:

1) Co-ordinate the work of health programme broadcasters with that of Ministry of Health officials, international aid organizations working in the health sector, radio producers and other big and small media.

2) Use the network of health care workers spread through all African countries to get feedback on how programmes are being perceived and also to organize group viewing and discussions.

3) Increase the amount of video-filming done in rural areas and interviews with ordinary people and both traditional healers and other health care workers in the field.

4) Decrease the number of interviews with urban medical professionals and programming that is of interest only to a well-to-do urban elite.

5) Broadcast in as many different African languages as possible. The documentary style lends itself to this goal because a voice-over or narration can be added in several different languages to the same visual images.

6) Do what television does best: tell stories with pictures. Radio is a better medium for group discussions and one on one interviews.

7) Adapt the extensive film libraries on UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, Red Cross, URTNA and other international organizations to local needs. These films are often free or very inexpensive and can add a lot visually to productions with low budgets.

8) Either hire broadcasters with a background in health education, train health workers in television production or send broadcasters to medical in-house training seminars to increase awareness of health care questions.

Footnotes

[1] Wilbur Shramn, "Mass Media and National Development in Problems Audio-Visuels", (January-February, 1983), p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

TV for Development in Cameroon: Learning From Experience

Cameroon had a lot of good reasons why it hasn't developed a television system until recently, even though some of her African neighbors have had television for 25 years.

Former President Ahmadou Ahidjo, when he announced the government's slow, step-by-step approach in 1963, suggested that money would be better spent on other development projects. Holding off on television, he reasoned, would give radio the resources and attention needed for it to develop without being in television's shadow.

Ahidjo also envisioned a television service that covered the whole country, was educational in nature, and broadcast very few imported programmes. He adamantly refused to develop the medium until he felt the country had the resources necessary to meet his criteria.

"We think we will attach a particular importance in the beginning of television to its educative role in Cameroon and avoid putting in place a television system that is expensive and difficult to maintain without financial resources", the former President said.[1]

"Before starting we should ensure a reserve of educational programming that is adapted to the real needs of the viewer and that the largest number of programmes possible are authentically Cameroon and African and reflect the characte and taste of the majority of viewers."

According to Emmanuel NGuiamba, the person in charge of the television unit at Radio-Cameroon, it was hoped that by waiting until the 1980's to develop television, Cameroon would be able to profit from the experience of other African nations where the medium has been evolving over the last 25 years.

"By waiting for 25 years we are starting with the technology of the eighties. We also didn't want television just in the capital. They are already priviledged and it wouldn't be fair to the rest of the country which wouldn't benefit," Mr. NGuiamba said.

Over the last few years, Cameroon with the help of German and French interests, has established an impressive television diffusion network with 14 transmission centres which, when fully operational, will reach 80 percent of Cameroon's population of six million with broadcast signals.

Television is scheduled to come on stream in Cameroon by the end of 1985. There have already been three trial broadcasting weeks that went relatively smoothly and gave the government and the general population a taste of what is to come and hope that daily broadcasts were on the horizon.

Eric Chinje, the senior anglophone on the television unit staff, believes that television couldn't be coming at a better time in Cameroon's history. The country is relatively prosperous, largely due to revenues produced by the domestic oil industry. President Paul Biya, who succeeded Ahidjo three years ago, has solidified political control of the country after putting down an attempted coup d'état in April of 1984.

A new political party, the Cameroonian People's Democratic Movement, was formed in 1985 and promises major reforms and a move toward more democratic institutions. (The first television broadcast in Cameroon was live coverage of the party's founding meeting in Bamenda.) Also, three dynamic new Ministries were created in the same year: Women's Affairs, Higher Education and Scientific Research; and Computer Services.

But despite the high spirits and optimism, some major structural problems exist on the programming side of Cameroon Television (CTV) that, if not addressed quickly, will risk the success of the whole $200 million (U.S.) project.

Several sources, representing media professionals in Cameroon, United Nations communications consultants and interested academics, fear that Cameroon has not spent enough money, time and energy to prepare a programming infrastructure.

The cautious approach to software taken by the television services planners may create problems now that the broadcasting hardware is operative and the public and government are anxiously awaiting the fruits of the massive investment.

Cameroon Television is fortunate enough to have a very talented nucleus of production talent that have either been trained or worked abroad or have experience with the national radio station. This core, often flying by the seat of their pants and working under difficult circumstances in temporary studios, have managed to put together some very respectable programming during the few weeks of experimental broadcasting.

However, many of these broadcasters believe that the success of these experiments have given authorities and the public a false sense of hope that television will come on stream quicker than was origianlly planned.

There is concern among many of those involved in developing television programming that there is a communication gap between them and the government. One broadcaster suggested that a number of people in the government are unaware of the complexity of television production.

"I have the feeling that there are a lot of people who are expecting programming miracles," another broadcaster said. "It comes as a surprise to people that you can't just go out and shoot something on a little VHS (home video) camera and turn around and put it on the air."

The production capacity of Cameroon Television was stretched to the limit preparing programmes to be broadcast for 20 hours over a four-day period with two months to prepare them. It seems, that at this point, there is little hope that the goal of producing a full schedule of domestic programming on a daily basis will be met in the near future.

According to a consultant with the International Telecommunications Union not only is the shortage of manpower a handicap, but the fact that a programming organizational structure has been slow in developing has also hampered production.

"Just months before Cameroon television is expected to go on the air daily, there is still no programme outline, no schedule, no programming philosophy. No decisions have been made on how many programs will be done or on what," he said.

The noble goal of giving television in Cameroon a major educational component appears to be a major casualty in the lack of emphasis put on developing a programming infrastructure. An effort has been made to extensively poll potential viewers to find out what sort of information they would like television to broadcast. Also, letters have been written to all the government Ministries asking them what they want to see on television and how they can contribute to programme development.

But this modest effort, though well intentioned, falls far short of what is needed to give Cameroon Television the strong educational character that the government intended to develop.

Part of the problem is that, instead of learning from the errors made by other African countries, which, for the most part, have not done well establishing education television, Cameroon appears to be repeating many of them.

"The politicians say they want educational television. But we're not taking the educational television route," believes Jean-Vincent Tchienehom, the assistant programming director of Radio Cameroon and an author on the subject of educational television. "We are going to find ourselves with equipment and a structure that doesn't respond to their initial demand."

Tchienehom and others think that Cameroon's capacity to educate was greatly compromised the moment the decision was made to build a heavily centralized, homogenous structure.

"It's not by coincidence that Cameroon has two official languages and hundreds of national languages. The nature of the country dictates that the agricultural, health and educational problems in all the regions are dramatically different."

"In these conditions, how can we produce programmes for the north, where there is a shortage of water and trees and they grow cotton, and for the south, which is largely tropical rain forest, to be seen in both areas. Even the economic efficiency of a homogenized consumption of programming is doubtful. Logically educational television requires a decentralized structure."[2]

There are no plans at present to establish regional television production centers, though Radio Cameroon has set up a number of strong regional radio stations. The television planners hope that the purchase of six mobile units, that can be spread throughout the country and beam programmes back to Yaounde for broadcast on the national network, will ensure that the regions will be adequately covered by Cameroon Television.

But even these mobile units are considered by some observers as another example of where Cameroon has not been able to benefit, as much as it could have, from establishing it's television service in the eighties. The costly mobile units, which are the size of very large mobile homes, are chock full of very sophisticated and very sensitive video recording, editing and transmitting equipment.

During the trial broadcast period, the African heat, the irregular current, the dust and handling by inexperienced operators took its toll on the equipment in the mobile unit, which suffered a number of breakdowns. Similar problems were incurred with the portable camera and recording units that many of the broadcasters consider too sensitive and much too sophisticated for their needs.

Admittedly, the equipment is capable of producing one of the sharpest, clearest and most colourful images in the world. But if the very heavy and cumbersome German-made equipment is constantly breaking down and the sophisticated three-tube cameras need to be adjusted before each interview, as cameramen found to be the case during the trial period, part of the advantage of modern technological advances is lost. (Broadcast quality one-tube cameras with recording equipment that can be carried and manipulated by one person and cost a fraction of the price of the German equipment is on the market.)

* * *

As mentioned earlier in this paper, one of the reasons that the government of Cameroon decided to hold off on the development of television until recently was because it wanted to build up radio broadcasting. With its network of regional stations, the country has established a substantial radio broadcasting system.

Radio Cameroon's record in non-formal education is particularly important because the television planners hope to transfer personnel and expertise from educational radio to educational television broadcasting. A survey of journalists, producers and Ministry officials involved with educational radio programming revealed a great deal of dissatisfaction with the broadcasts.

The three principal complaints are that: (a) not enough air time is given to educational broadcasts; (b) the programmes are mostly in European languages not well understood by the listeners; and (c) the programmes are exceedingly boring and exhibit few pedagogical or communications skills.

Jean-Vincent Tchienehom, the assistant programme director of Radio Cameroon spent two years studying the communications needs of Cameroon. He found that there was no effort made to co-ordinate educational radio programming and it suffered as a result.

"Educational programming is handicapped by a lack of orientation, lack of creativity, too many imported programmes and no method of letting people know when good programmes are going to be aired."

"However, the most serious problem is the portion of broadcasting time given to education. In a developing country where 3/5 of the population demand an education to be able to better participate in national life, there is no excuse that you will find on the radio only one regular half-hour programme weekly on agriculture and one on health care."[3]

He points out in his study, which was commissioned by the Minister of Information and Culture, that three quarters of the broadcasting time occupied by programming in the vernacular languages was taken up by public notices, personal messages and music, leaving little time for educational programming.

Dr. Cecile Bomba-NKolo, who is in charge of training for the Ministry of Health in Cameroon, agrees that the absence of co-ordination greatly reduces the effectiveness of educational broadcasting.

"We can't minimize the effect of the mass media. But radio is not up to snuff. There are so many entertainment shows there is little place left for health programmes and the little we do is not co-ordinated. There is no system. Everyone does a bit on their own. Women's Affairs organizes a programme on health. But they don't contact us. If all the health section media work was co-ordinated together, it would be better."

Because the programmes are not given a priority they are often broadcast after 10 p.m. when the target audience, usually rural people, is asleep. And the prime time broadcasting hours, between 6 and 8 p.m. are devoted to programmes in English on the national network, though 80 percent of the listeners understand French, if they understand one of the official languages.

Cameroon has a distinct disadvantage over many other African countries for broadcasting in vernacular languages: there are 250 of them in the country. As a result, the educational programmes, which are broadcast on the national network for the most part, are in the two official languages: French and English. Pidgin, a sort of bastardized English, is arguably the most common language in the country, but not a word of Pidgin is heard on the radio. (However, the Ministry of Information and Culture is studying the possibility of using Pidgin on the radio to increase listener comprehension.)

A major criticism made of educational radio broadcasters is that they tend to interview experts and development professionals who often talk in technical terms in French or English which just passes over the heads of the target audiences. Gilbert Tsals Ekani, who produces radio programmes on agriculture, says that he would like to feature more farmers on his weekly programme. (There were only three farmers featured over one 52-week period.)[4] But he has difficulty finding farmers who speak French well enough to go on the air.

A study done by INANDES, an organization which specializes in rural education, revealed that radio listeners found it difficult to follow programmes that were in French or English, languages "they don't master well".[5]

"The rural people surveyed suggested that the programmes destined for them be in vernacular languages and transmitted from the provincial stations. By broadcasting in many languages there is a better chance of touching many listeners," the study concluded.

The study also found that rural people thought they should have a greater input into programme content, interesting programmes should be repeated and the same programmes should be put on the air on several days and in different time slots over the course of a week.

Finally, to effectively communicate, educational programming has to entertain as well as captivate and inform its audience. All those involved in broadcasting in Cameroon admit that almost all educational radio programming in Cameroon is very, very dull and hard to follow. In most cases, the programmes consist of experts from various fields reading a paper over the air. There are few discussions, few interviews and next to no input from listeners or those who are supposed to benefit from the information.

"It is not pleasant to listen to. There are no journalists who ask questions and no practical questions from everyday life. Just lectures. People reading from books," Dr. Bombo-NKolo says of the radio health programmes.

"We need to distract at the same time as educate. Mix in a bit of traditional music, for example. People appreciate that much more than a formal course."

Several of those interviewed had major reservations about how the new television service will be able to do educational programming considering Radio Cameroon's dismal record.

"If we can't get it together to do radio, how in the world is television, which is ten times as complicated, going to work," one educational radio broadcaster said. "We are already restricted financially and television costs a lot more. We might be able to do a lot better if we had the funds to prepare programmes in the field. But the only time we travel is on public relations tours with the Minister."

Tchienehom admits that radio's experience doesn't augur well for educational television in Cameroon. The most obvious solution, according to Tchienehom is to thoroughly study the possibilities for educational television and put powerful structures in place to apply the recommendations and administer the programming.

"They can't do what we're doing in radio on television. There is a need for some new communications policies for educational broadcasting," he said.

"(To avoid radio's errors) it is urgent to undertake studies by an interdisicplinary committee representing (the various government sectors involved in development education). And there is a need to identify, define and analyze the communications needs in order to satisfactorily elaborate a strategy, evaluate possible options and choose action in response to resources."[6]

* * *

Only a handful of Ministries have responded to Cameroon Television's letter soliciting interest in educational programmes. The Ministries of Agriculture, Women's Affairs, Higher Education and Scientific Research, and Social Affairs are all very interested in getting involved with the new television service.

Agriculture is particularly anxious to strengthen its development-support communications and has requested the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations to make recommendations on how it might do so.

"Agriculture is the priority of priorities and will need a lot of time on the new television service," the Vice Minister of Agriculture Solomon NFor Gwei said. "We are expanding and seeking ways of improving our communications service with the coming of television because our efforts to reach farmers have not been adequate in the past."

The Minister of Women's Affairs, Yaou Aissatou, says her Ministry is also "very interested" in using television to educate women.

"Women have been left out of traditional educational channels. We hope to change mentalities, highlight problems, find solutions and convince women that they can do anything that men can do."

The Minister hopes that televisions will eventually be placed in women's centers around the country and animators at the centers will be trained to work with the women following broadcasts produced by the Ministry in conjunction with Cameroon Television.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is counting on television to help make the general population more aware of this low-profile Ministry and the services it provides, according to administrator Laurent Tsoungui Ayissi.

The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research has another communications problem. It finds that many of its research results never get applied in the field because of administrative bottlenecks.

The problem in the past has been in informing Ministry officials about results and ensuring that they feed them into their extension service pipelines.

"We are making some very interesting discoveries but nobody does anything about it," complains Manfor Festus Ambe, a senior researcher with the Ministry. "We hope television, because of its captivating nature, will raise up people's interest and close the gap between producing results and putting them in practice."

Though these Ministries, among others, are enthusiastic about participating in the preparation of educational television programming, there is a great deal of confusion over the dynamics of that participation. Those contacted generally agreed that there was an urgent need for some kind of administrative structure to clarify the situation.

"There is a need for the television unit to organize," Mr. NFor Gwei, the Vice Minister of Agriculture suggests.

"We are waiting for television to tell us what we can do. Television has to show us the way to go to develop programming," says Madeline Koualham, who is in charge of educational services for the Ministry of Women's Affairs. "We want to show the activities of women and if there isn't enough production capacity at Cameroon Television, we'll do it ourselves. We're waiting for an answer."

Dr. Bomba-NKolo at the Ministry of Public Health agrees that before television can be used to support development, "priorities need to be defined."

Assuming that an educational television structure is put in place and the relationship between the Ministries and Cameroon Television is better defined, another major obstacle has to be hurdled to ensure that effective educational programming is possible.

There is danger that there will not be enough journalists, producers and directors trained in television production, let alone educational television production, to meet the communications needs of the Ministries. The television school that was part of the initial television development plan has been preoccupied with training technicians to maintain the transmission hardware. Though 26 students and European teachers have been ready to start classes to develop programming staff for over a year, that department still hasn't become operational.

E.S.S.T.I., the mass communications school at the Université de Yaoundé, has provided the majority of the radio and television journalists who are employed by the Ministries and charged with producing educational programming. But the curriculum of the school tends to be very theoretical. For example, television journalism students start to work with production equipment only at the end of their second year and only once a week even in their third year.

To further illustrate the lack of priority given to educational television by E.S.S.T.I., a 120 page document, published by the school on all facets of television, devoted only one page to educational television.[7] There was coverage of satellites, the social and moral implications of television, the history of television, and even 15 pages on television's electrical waves and colour temperatures, but hardly a word on educational television.

Also, the whole orientation of the school is to prepare journalists and not producers of educational programming. No pedagogical skills or techniques are taught. Also, E.S.S.T.I. graduates, as a rule, don't like to work for the Ministries because the pay is lower than what is paid by newspapers, radio and television and they see it as a dead end with no opportunities for career advancement.

The net result is that educational television risks suffering the same problems that educational radio has had in Cameroon: journalists trained in western journalistic techniques, lacking animation and creativity, end up bringing in experts to talk over the heads of the average person in European languages.

"Nobody is serious about what they are doing in educational broadcasting," Jean-Vincent Tchienehom of Radio Cameroon said. "The notion is very important but nobody has been trained how to do non-formal education through the media. Some information is passed on to the radio listeners but no real education."

For many of those interviewed, television in Cameroon is at a crucial crossroad. Now, while it is still in its developmental stage, the opportunity exists to build up and foster a structure and develop talent to use television to educate the general population, as those who inspired the medium's development envisioned. The choice is very clear: will television in Cameroon be merely a very expensive instrument of prestige used to entertain the country's elite or will it live up to its promise of enlightening and educating the population as a whole, contributing to Cameroon's development and national unity? Only time will tell.

Recommendations:

1) Give educational television priority. Attach the most talented production people to those programmes and ensure they have the resources and independence needed to produce quality work.

2) Ensure that educational programmes are broadcast at times that will maximize exposure to their target populations. Certainly if the primary orientation of the medium is to educate, those programmes should be broadcast in prime time. The slots before or after the evening news are particularly good.

3) Educational television shouldn't be boring. It should capture the dynamism of reality. Nothing is duller than two people sitting talking to each other. Radio does that just as well and cheaper. Television is pictures telling

stories. Create "teachable moments" by mixing in entertainment with enlightenment.

4) Involve ordinary people in productions. Interview them. Show them doing things. Find out whay they expect and want. Experts can tell people what they should do to change but if people don't understand and decide they want to, nothing is going to move.

5) Improve the chances of educational television's message sinking in by organizing discussions led by trained animators following group viewings of programmes.

6) Use television to train, inform and co-ordinate the work of extension workers in the field. Though the benefit of instant feedback is lost, it is still a cheaper method of conducting in-service education than bringing employees together in one location.

7) Establish a Development Support Communications superstructure to co-ordinate, not only the work of television programming, but that of radio, newspapers and the small media. If the job is too big for one organization, it might be divided up into areas such as: agriculture, health, etc. and others.

8) Ministries might be wise to train their own personnel in media techniques or ensure that the current source, the Ministry of Information and Culture and E.S.S.T.I., take measures to prepare professionals to produce educational programming.

9) Depending on the degree of co-operation between the Ministries and Cameroon Television vis-à-vis production capacity, the Ministries could benefit from purchasing and operating their own portable television recording equipment. This would allow them greater flexibility for recording and editing could be done at the Cameroon Television studios.

10) If the resources aren't available to produce as much material in the field as would be desired, educational films from international organizations and various countries can be aired and followed by discussions which relate the content to Cameroonian experience.

11) Don't bite off more than can be chewed. If the production capacity is being strained to produce a weekly programme, produce bi-weekly, monthly or just specials. It makes more sense to repeat a well produced programme several times than quickly produce shoddy work just to fill a time slot. One way of starting slow is by producing educational material to be broadcast on news or public affairs programmes or in the form of spot advertisements or public service announcements.

Footnotes

[1] Jean-Vincent Tchienehom, "Les sciences de l'information et la technologie des communications", Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre de l'information et de la Culture (Yaoundé, 1981), p. 18.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

[3] Jean-Vincent Tchienehom, "La Television, Pourquoi Faire?" (Yaoundé, 1985) unpublished, p. 5.

[4] "Calendier des emissions radiophoniques du Ministere de l'Agriculture", published by the Ministere de l'Agriculture de Cameroun, (Yaoundé, 1985).

[5] Patrice ATeh NDe, "Evaluation de l'enquete radio en milieu rural auprès des abonnes d'INADES-Formation au nord Cameroun en 1979", (Yaoundé, 1980), p.

[6] Tchienehom, "Pourquoi Faire ...", op. cit., p. 6.

[7] Hartzer, Desormeaux, Bordes, "Théorie et pratique du journalisme de television", (Yaoundé, 1984).

Conclusion:
Yes to Television
But at What Price?

Most of the ingredients necessary to "reinvent television" and radically change its present orientation already exist in Africa. Some considerable talent has been developed in film and television production; networks of field workers (agricultural agents, teachers and health workers) are already operating and the urban poor and rural populations have been receptive to information on development in Ivory Coast and other countries which have managed to reach them with a combination of educational programming and field animation.

If television is going to be used as a tool for development it will be the combination of newly developed technologies -- solar power, satellites, low-cost portable video equipment -- and the decentralization of the medium that will make it possible.

Field animation or having someone on the spot explaining what is on the screen and answering questions can be the glue needed to make the technology-delivered messages stick. In fact, the argument can be that informal education via television is very rarely successful unless there is that link between the broadcasts and the field workers of the agencies of social change.[1]

People can move along the road to progress if offered alternatives and are encouraged to open up to new prospects and opportunities. Television can contribute by showing the way to improved health care, agricultural practices and other means of attaining social and economic prosperity.

But in order to do this, television has to be allowed to do what it does best: communicate a variety of ideas and points of view, constructively criticize, inform and stimulate debate, or, in other words, foster an open free exchange between all those involved in the development process.

To be sure, large sums of money are being spent on building and operating broadcasting systems in all but a few African countries. But before television can be "reinvented" and play a more important role in supporting and promoting development, dynamic and courageous political leadership must want it do do so.

It remains to be seen how much political will exists to mould the medium into a force for inspiring effective change and giving it the freedom to work towards that goal.

Admittedly, in the sixties and seventies, when the majority of African nations developed their broadcasting systems, there was no way of predicting the technological revolution which would make it possible to decentralize broadcasting systems and open them up to a larger percentage of the population.

Now, there is the possibility of putting, simple to operate, inexpensive, one-tube video cameras, in each region of a country, to be used by local populations to express and explain to each other and officials their views, opinions, progress and needs regarding development.

Jean Vincent Tchienehom of Radio-Cameroun finds "narrowcasting" or community television rather than "broadcasting" holds the greatest hope for television in Africa.

"More and more with miniaturized and low-cost material there is the possibility to produce television for your neighbors on demand. In countries like Cameroon that have a great cultural diversity and modest material and human resources, we should look at alternatives to centralized television. In the 1950's it was the only technology available and now we can see its inadequacies."[2]

* * *

A major obstacle in changing the orientation of African television broadcasting towards communications for development, is the broadcasters. In the countries surveyed the majority of writers, producers, directors and journalists were either educated in the west or used western programming as their inspiration for productions. Because the broadcasters, for the most part, are part of the educated, urban elite their programmes tend to speak to that sector of society.

The authors of Broadcasting in the Third World suggest that the first step toward making television more responsive to development goals and creating a uniquely African television, is to introduce broadcasters to concepts of development for communications and expose them to rural village and shanty town life.[3]

"Perhaps the luxury of immersing producers in their own cultures and forming creative groups of broadcasters, scholars and carriers of the tradition, who will plan schedules and invent programmes together, holds out a fragile hope that broadcasting might live up to its promise of contributing to cultural continuity,"[4]

The general manager of the Nigeria Television Authority station in Ibadan, Africa's first station, agrees that there is a need to make producers more aware of development needs but adds that all the blame for television's failure to live up to its promise shouldn't be shouldered by the broadcasters. Bayo Sanda, the

Ibadan GM, finds the objectives of television broadcasting have never been clearly defined.

"No one advised us to serve an elitist segment of the population. There has been no planned strategy and programming has been uncoordinated with any other developmental efforts. The various officials have to decide what they want to do with television, identify the problems and allow us to go ahead and deal with them."

* * *

The two words that are most heard in discussions of the use of television for development in Africa are "means" and "potential." The general feeling among government officials, broadcasters and international aid donors is that television's time is going to come to the continent. But as it stands now, television in support of development is believed by many to be a squandered resource and it remains to be seen when and if African nations will have the resources necessary and the desire to make television a truly popular medium.

The international donors can be expected to continue helping to train broadcasters and finance some non-formal educational programming and coproductions. But spokesmen for the organizations contacted said the donors can't be counted on for much more in the near future.

Organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, among others, invested heavily in educational television over the last two decades. But since these projects are considered by many to have ended ultimately in failure, most foreign aid organizations have turned their backs on television, preferring more cost-effective communications media to support development.

Foreign sources certainly aren't prepared, at this point, to provide the massive financing necessary to make television different from what it is now. Wilbur Schramm has great reservations about television ever realizing its potential in Africa: "It can be said that television has never been used to its full capacity in aid of economic development. It can also be said that it may never be financially possible to do either."[5]

* * *

Television is undoubtably a very potent and compelling medium. It easily attracts audiences. A television viewer doesn't have to be literate to understand the message and producing a program for television is much easier than making a film. Television if compared to radio is by far the better medium for communicating information. Television can do everything that radio can and much more. Because of the combination of sound and pictures, television can be used to communicate messages that might be very difficult to follow on the radio.[6]

Why then are so few development professionals and communications specialists so cool to the idea of using television to support development preferring radio and smaller media instead? The answer is simple. Television, despite the massive amounts of money being funnelled into it by African governments, still reaches relatively few people and is very expensive to operate.

Even in Ivory Coast where an extraordinary effort has been made to blanket the country with television signals, still only 12.4 percent of the population in the interior, said they were informed by television in a UNICEF/Ministère de la Santé study. The study, which included 331 respondants in 48 villages around the country, revealed that 65 percent got their news and development information from the radio.

Zaire, like many other African countries, is caught in a very serious dilemma. Just paying off the debt incurred in building the television broadcasting infrastructure and keeping the system operating with a minimal amount of domestic programming swallows up 90 percent of the government's communications budget.

"A contradiction exists here in Zaire. There is no money for television to produce development programmes because television is expensive to produce. Radio is cheaper to produce but television uses up all the money. The result is that not much in the way of development education gets done in either mass media," one journalist in Zaire remarked.

When compared with the money spent on television, radio is the poor sister. Racine Sy, the former director of Senegal's very successful Radio-Rurale, claims that small radio stations could be established in every town in Senegal if the radio section had the television section's budget. He complains that radio and television are supposed to be developed together but television has priority and uses up the vast majority of l'Office de la Radioffusion Télévision Senegal budget.

Even an organization as committed to small media forms of development support communications as l'Eglise du Christ du Zaire spends 30 percent of its budget on television productions compared to 17 percent for radio and 38 percent for small media such as slide shows, posters, flip charts and so on.

However, the feeling, among many of those who criticize the high cost of television and its difficulty in reaching more than a small percentage of the population, is that television's time is going to come despite its problems.

Allan Kulakow of the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, D.C. in a study of rural radio in the Sahel region was surprised to find how quickly television's influence was growing in the region.

"It was clear during the visits that television is playing an increasingly important role in some countries, one that cannot be ignored despite a continued conviction that radio is more practical and realistic as a tool for development support....Television despite its problems, cannot be ignored, and its growth will be encouraged by national governments."[7]

The question that must be asked by national governments and international organizations is this: Can television be made more cost effective to justify its existence in the near future? If the ability of television to communicate development messages is not improved by a dramatic increase in public access to the medium through a wider transmission of signals and group viewing, combined with field animation, television will remain a drain on public treasuries. At this point in its short history, African television is not a very effective educator and is taking the lion's share of very limited communications resources. We have seen in this paper how successful and cost-effective other forms of development support communications are, compared with television.

Should national governments continue with television full speed ahead while other media and methods hold so much more proven potential at a fraction of the cost? Yes, television can't be ignored. But at what cost?

Footnotes

[1] Katz, Wedell, Pitsworth and Shiner, Broadcasting in the Third World: Promise and Performance (London 1978) p. 224.

[2] Jean Vincent Tchienehom, "Les sciences de l'information et la technologie des communications," Rapport à Monsieur le Ministre de l'information et de la Culture (Cameroun) unpublished, p. 7.

[3] Katz etc., Broadcasting..., op. cit., p. 237.

[4] Ibid., p. 206.

[5] Wilbur Schramm, "Mass Media and National Development" in Problems Audiovisuels, January-February 1983, p. 9.

[6] Heli Perrett, Using Communication Support in Projects: The World Bank's Experience (Washington, D.C. 1982).

[7] Allan Kulakow, Rural Radio in the Sahel: A Survey of Six Countries, Volume 1: Overview and Country Profiles (Washington, D.C. 1979).

Photographs

SOLAR-POWERED TELEVISIONS AND GROUP VIEWING

If the fabulous expense of broadcast television can be justified in developing countries, the medium must attempt to serve and reach the vast majority of the people on the continent who need information on development most: the rural population.

Both Niger and Ivory Coast have made great strides in covering their countries with broadcast signals and placing government-purchased and maintained televisions in villages for group viewing.

1 Children in Libore Bangou Banda in Niger, shown here, are watching a solar-powered black and white television set placed in an old bread stall in the village centre. The television is maintained by the Societé Nigerienne de Télévision, which is owned in part by the government and in part by private interests.

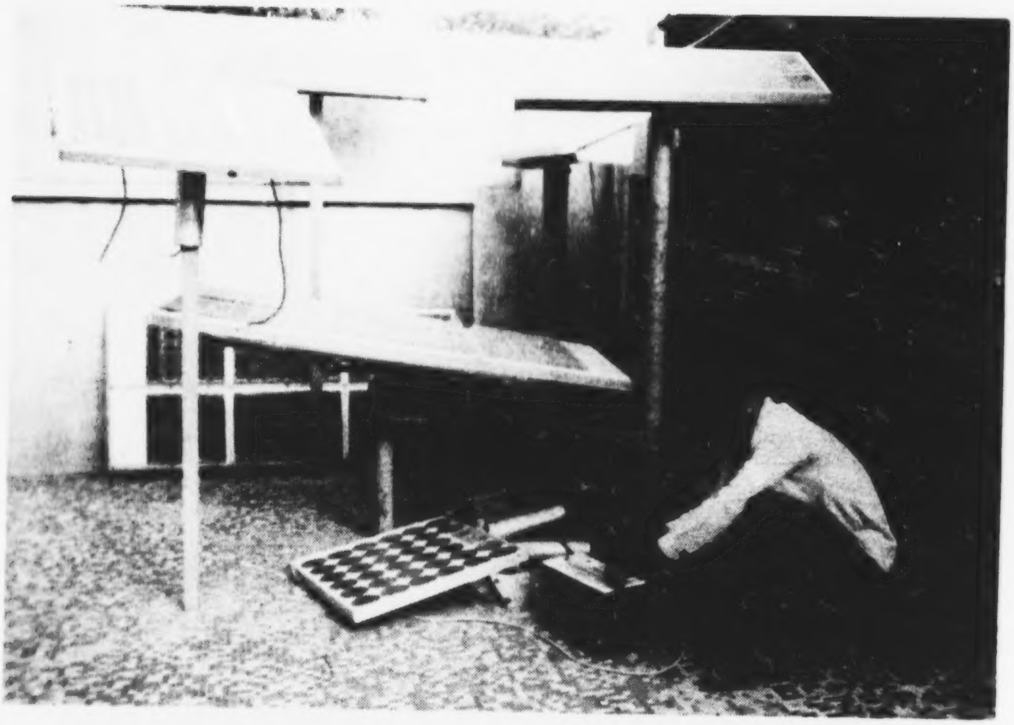
2 A technician, in the second pic, is testing one of the 450 panels which will be placed in villages this year. So far, 1,050 televisions have been placed in villages, 800 of which are being run on solar-power.

3 In the third pic, another technician repairs a village television. Most of the repairs, however, are done on the spot in villages by simply replacing book-sized chassis and taking the faulty component, and not the whole receiver, back to the Niamey repair shop.

4 In the last pic, we see a group television viewing centre built by the village chief in Assisini, Ivory Coast. Nigeria's military government has launched a campaign to get well-payed urban dwellers to pool their resources and donate televisions and build group-viewing centres in their native villages.

1

2



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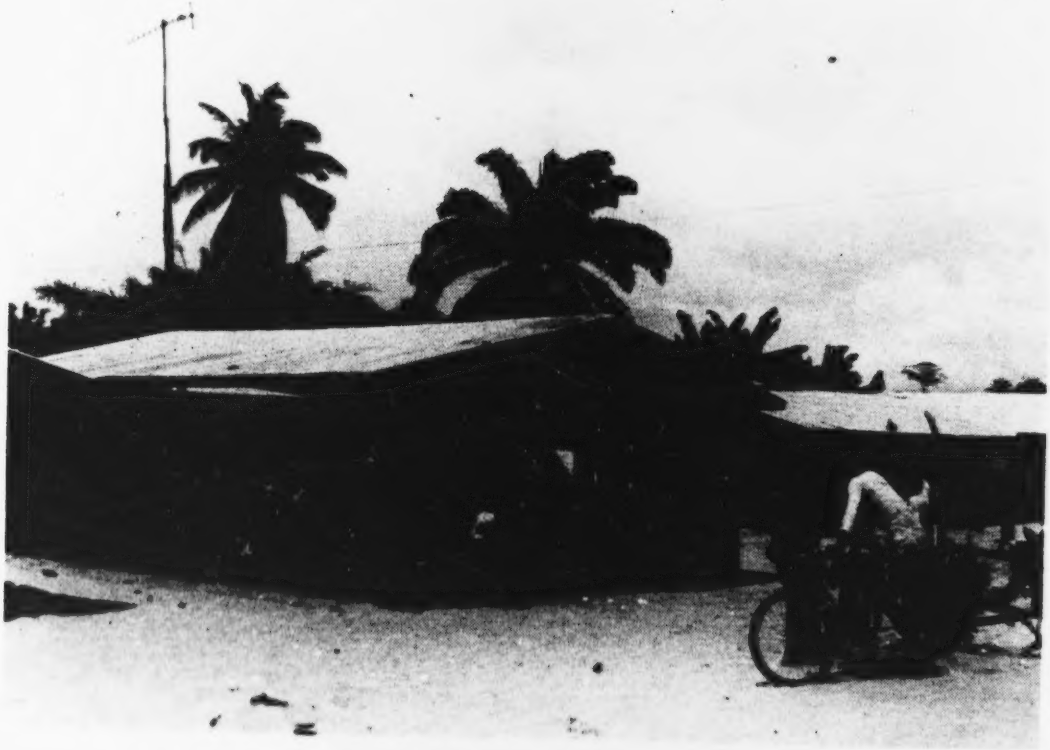

4

FORMAL EDUCATIONAL TELEVISION A FAILURE

Televisions were placed in 70 percent of the schools in Ivory Coast as part of the world's largest experiment with educational television. But after 10 years and very disappointing results, (the performance of the television educated students on tests was substantially below that of the conventionally educated students) the use of television in the formal, classroom instruction of children in Ivory Coast has been abandoned and is largely considered a failure.

5 However, the televisions placed in the village schools, like this one in N'Driko, are being watched by adults in the evenings who are interested in non-formal educational broadcasts on rural development.

The Ministère de Développement Rurale has started to hire animators to work around the country and watch the programmes with the villagers. They will also explain the messages, answer questions and lead discussions after viewings.

Without the absolutely crucial input of animators in the field to stimulate discussion which leads to action, the mass media has little chance of bringing about change.

One of the reasons educational television failed in Ivory Coast was because it was unidirectional. You can't ask a television receiver questions and it doesn't see if you are understanding the message or not.

5

MAKING DEVELOPMENT TELEVISION WORK

Some of the most exciting development support television in Africa is being produced in one of the continent's poorest countries: Niger.

Many African countries, like Zaire and Zambia, chose to invest in a high-prestige, expensive, centralized, broadcasting centre and, as a result, are left with few resources to produce much more than studio interviews.

Niger, by contrast, has opted for portable video equipment and video-films more than half its programmes on location, more often than not, in rural villages. Télé-Sahel also has concentrated its resources on the non-formal education of youth and adults.

6 We see here an example of a "teachable moment" in the making which will
be part of the weekly Télé-Sahel youth programme "Magazine de Jeunesse".
The producers mix light entertainment, shot at a youth centre in a popular
7 quarter in Niamey, with a discussion by youths and community leaders on
problems faced by young people.

The music and dance attract viewers who otherwise wouldn't be interested in the discussion.

8 In the third picture, women from a rural area near Abidjan, Ivory Coast, perform a traditional dance for the Télévision Ivoirienne studio cameras.

Unfortunately, despite the central role women play in rural economies in Africa, they are, more often than not, ignored by the medium except for singing and dancing or the occasional "women's programme" on health and child care or domestic chores.

Almost no mention is ever made of women in programmes on rural development even though women spend two thirds of their time working in the agricultural sector and produce almost half the food consumed on the continent.

6

7

8

TELEVISION VS. RADIO

Television can do everything radio can and much more. Because of its combination of pictures and sound, television can be used to communicate messages that might be difficult to follow on the radio. Why is it then, that all international aid organizations prefer to support the development of radio over television? Cost-effectiveness and reach.

A community radio station could be set up in every town of 10,000 or more for what it costs to build and operate one national television station. One hour of television programming costs as much as 20 times as much to produce as an hour of radio and television sets are between 20 and 30 times as expensive.

In Ivory Coast, where 80 percent of the country is covered by television signals, only 12.4 percent of the rural population said in a recent poll that they were informed by television compared to 65 percent by radio.

9 Radios, as we see in this pic taken in Zaire, are also very portable. They can be listened to while doing other activities like household chores or farm work.

9

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT COMMUNICATIONS AND SMALL MEDIA

Films, slide shows, film strips, flannelographs, posters, t-shirts, flash cards, flip charts, picture and comic books and video cassettes are all potent tools for communicating development messages when placed in the hands of field workers and animators.

If combined with the mass media -- radio, television and, to a lesser extent, newspapers -- the chances of reaching large numbers of people and affecting social and economic changes are greatly increased.

This one-two punch of small and big media working together has been proven to be the most effective way for mobilizing people to participate in their own development.

10 The members of the Santé Pour Tous programme's Committee for Development in the village of Kindamba, Zaire have been trained in the use of a variety of small media which it uses to introduce the possibilities for village development.

11 The committee, supported by audio-visual materials on water-borne diseases and the advantages of giving birth in a clinic, inspired the **12** construction of a filter on the village water source and a clinic staffed by a nurse and midwife.

The committee is now sharing the same materials with other villages and discussing its successes.

13 In the fourth pic we see a billboard in Kinshasa, Zaire which makes the link between untidyness and malaria.

SANTE POUR TOUS
AU ZAIRE

10

11

12

OBOYINGUNGI?
BOYA NAINO BOSOTO!

13

COST-EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

The PANAFTEL micro-wave communications network, which links some of the poorest countries in Africa in the Sahel region, is considered an expensive white elephant by many Canadian aid officials, even though Canada invested heavily in the construction of it.

The system is a long way from being financially self-sufficient and is frequently inoperative because some of the countries on the network can't afford the fuel to operate the relay station generators.

14 Niger has invested in PANAFTEL relay stations, like the one shown here in Niamey, as well as a satellite ground receiving station and a color television network.

The argument might be made, that if the country had not spent so much money on these high-prestige communications projects, it might not have had to cut its budding network of rural animators, who took films, slides and other small development support communications media into the villages, for budgetary reasons.

The small media have a much lower profile than the big media but have a much better track record in inspiring rural development.

14